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Paddle Dolls and Performance

ELLEN F. MORRIS

Abstract

Paddle Dolls have been interpreted variously as concubines for the dead, as children's toys, or as figurines embodying the concept of fertility and rebirth. This article argues on the basis of eight lines of evidence that they were representations of specific living women, namely the Late Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom khener-dancers of Hathor at Deir el-Bahari. Paddle dolls have been recovered from secure archaeological contexts at very few other sites and only in small numbers, but they are frequently found at Asasif. Their tattoos resemble those found on women buried in the precinct of the mortuary temple. Likewise, their bright, patterned outfits are strikingly similar to those of one particular Theben khener-troupe of Hathor depicted in the tomb of Kenamun (TT 93). The figurines were often interred in groups, and these groups could include a young girl figurine, just as khener-troupes often included girl trainees. The figurines are also found in statistically significant numbers with clappers, harps, and mirrors, all equipment typical of khener-women. The shape of the figurines, it is argued, consciously echoes that of a menat-counterpoise, the sacred fetish of Hathor, and it is suggested that the marked emphasis on the pubic triangle is due to the role of the khener-women in reinvigorating the dead king, which they undertook in the same manner as Hathor had revived her own father, the god-king Re, in the Contendings of Horus and Seth. It is secondarily argued that virtually all of these lines of evidence also apply to the truncated female figurines typical of the Twelfth Dynasty.

Since paddle dolls began to emerge from excavated contexts at the beginning of the last century, they have received little respect. Herbert Winlock described the figurines thusly, "They are barbarous looking things, whittled out of thin paddles of wood, gaudily painted, and with great mops of hair made of strings of little beads of black mud ending in elongated globs."[1] Although Winlock did not specify his reasons for terming this genre of figurine "barbarous," the large pubic triangle that dominated the lower portions of the figurines likely counted among them. Encompassed in his aspersion also may have been the tattoos—figural or lozenge shaped—which occasionally ornamented the areas of the figurines left uncovered by gaudy dress or jewelry.

Efforts to ascertain the purpose and larger cultural meaning of paddle dolls have stimulated much discussion. Winlock excavated a great many of these artifacts in tombs at Asasif, and he noted their resemblance to dolls he had seen in the arms of Nubian girls, even including a picture of one such doll in his monograph *Excavations at Deir el Bahri 1911–1931* to prove his point.[2] His comparison likely also rested upon use-wear analysis, for in the records of the excavations at Asasif it was occasionally noted that a figurine "shows much signs of wear and the edges are broken, as though the doll had

[1] H. Winlock, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri 1911–1931* (New York, 1942), 207. For a similarly disparaging assessment, see Hayes, *Scepter I*, 219.

[2] Winlock, *Excavations*, pl. 38.

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been played with."[3] John Garstang, who excavated paddle dolls at Beni Hasan, had a like assessment. In reference to a paddle doll excavated in tomb 9, he declared the genre "another class of children's toys. . . . Each particular specimen naturally illustrates the likings of its youthful maker or owner rather than any set convention in the fashion of such objects."[4]

Despite the ethnoarchaeological parallels Winlock observed in the appearance and likely manipulation of the artifacts, the blatant display of the pubic triangle on the paddle dolls and their presence in many adult burials discomfited him and led him to suggest that the figurines may on occasion have been "found in a burial as representations of dancing girls rather than as children's playthings."[5] In his book *The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom in Thebes*, Winlock again shifted his reasoning and conclusion slightly, stating that the paddle dolls were most likely dolls "especially in those cases where we found only one and that one sadly worn. But when ten dolls, all new and only a bit fly-specked, were discovered, they were probably concubines."[6] The notion that the sexually explicit paddle dolls were meant to serve as otherworldly sexual partners[7] or to stimulate the sexual potency of the deceased[8] has found many supporters. Other scholars suggest that paddle dolls were strongly associated with Hathor, "Lady of the Vulva" (*nbt ḥtpt*) and with the protection offered by this mother goddess in matters of both birth and rebirth.[9] Most commonly, however, paddle dolls are rather generically seen as "a repository of the power of human sexuality and fertility"[10] and as a potential aid for enjoying both in the next life.

In this article, I argue from eight lines of evidence that paddle dolls represent female members of the Theban khener-troupe of musical performers that served the goddess Hathor and were perhaps co-opted and appended by Nebhepetre to his royal mortuary cult at Deir el-Bahari. Some of these lines (especially those having to do with tattoos and costume) take up threads of ideas that have been proposed by others,[11] but many lines are new (especially those dealing with location, demographics, and the association of the paddle dolls with clappers, harps, and mirrors) and derive from a study of the unpublished archaeological contexts of paddle dolls excavated in the environs of Deir el-Bahari. These tombs in Asasif represent by far the largest corpus of excavated paddle dolls, with other examples coming in much reduced numbers from nearby Theban tombs, from Beni Hasan, Sheikh Farag, Naga el-Deir, and from Rifeh. In the course of this essay, I will discuss all these lines of evidence, but the arguments inspired by the excavated contexts of the figurines constitute the meat of the study.

Paddle dolls are found in burials that date from the late Sixth Dynasty to the Thirteenth Dynasty, although their period of greatest popularity seems to have been the late Eleventh and early Twelfth Dynasties.[12] Many of the observations pertinent to paddle dolls are also applicable to the fully-rounded, Middle Kingdom figurines of nude, bejewelled, and frequently tattooed women with truncated legs,

[3] MMA tomb card 2609 for Asasif tomb 818. The figurine referred to is MMA 31.3.43. A similar sentiment is expressed about JE 56276 on the MMA tomb card 2562 for Asasif tomb 816.

[4] J. Garstang, *The Burial Customs of Ancient Egypt as Illustrated by Tombs of the Middle Kingdom* (London, 1907), 152.

[5] Winlock, *Excavations*, 207.

[6] Winlock, *Rise and Fall*, 47.

[7] Hayes, *Scepter I*, 219.

[8] M. Saleh and H. Sourouzian, *Official Catalogue: The Egyptian Museum Cairo* (Mainz, 1987), cat. 81.

[9] See the discussion in G. Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor* (Oxford, 1993), 217.

[10] P. Bienkowski and A. Tooley, *Gifts of the Nile* (London, 1995), 49.

[11] See especially A. Tooley, "Middle Kingdom Burial Customs. A Study of Wooden Models and Related Materials, vol I." (Ph.D. diss., University of Liverpool, 1989), 311, 324–25. Tooley equated paddle dolls with the *ḫkrt nsw* who performed for Hathor and identified the nude truncated figurines with the *ḫnrt*. Her arguments are primarily based upon iconographic similarities between the figurines, performers depicted in art, and the women buried at Deir el-Bahari.

[12] J. Bourriau, *Pharaohs and Mortals. Egyptian Art in the Middle Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1989), 127.

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which have been so thoroughly discussed by Geraldine Pinch, Angela Tooley, and others.[13] Although the main focus of this article is paddle dolls, the relationship between this "barbarous" genre and its quintessentially Middle Kingdom counterpart will be touched upon as well. The largely unpublished records from Lisht North provide particularly important comparative material, as this cemetery is the provenience of the greatest quantity of excavated, truncated, nude, female figurines of Middle Kingdom date.[14]

The Khener and Their Dances

From the end of the Middle Kingdom and onward through the New Kingdom, female figurines of many different types were dedicated at temples, particularly those wholly or partially devoted to the cult of Hathor.[15] It is my contention that in the late Eleventh Dynasty, when the manufacture of paddle dolls is first witnessed in earnest, and when the tradition of offering votives at temples was not strong, paddle dolls were manufactured primarily by craftsmen associated with the temple at Deir el-Bahari and distributed (or perhaps sold) to people who wished to associate themselves with the khener-dancers and/or to those who desired the essence of the dancers to perform "beautiful dancing. . . . every day"[16] for their own ka.

Before launching into a discussion of the archaeological and iconographic evidence that links paddle dolls to real performers, it is important to discuss the identity and function of the khener. Studies by Del Nord[17] and William Ward[18] in the 1980s effectively challenged the long held equation of khener-women (*ḫnrwt*) with members of the harim. The verb *ḫnr* can be read "to confine," and so scholars typically equated the musically inclined khener-women with inhabitants of the king's private chambers, shown performing in scenes of palace-life at Amarna. As Nord pointed out, however, members of the khener often included both males and married women. This rendered problematic the analogy of the khener-woman with the hypothetical Egyptian concubine "who, like the Japanese geisha, was always well turned out, well mannered, and adept in music, games, and polite conversation."[19]

In tomb scenes from the Old Kingdom until the New Kingdom that depict members of the khener, the three most common actions they perform are singing, dancing, and clapping. Clearly then, the khener were musical performers, and the existence of the office of "overseer of the khener" led Ward to suggest that the khener was a formalized institution—a "troupe of singers and dancers."[20] Artistic and inscriptional evidence indicates that there were three different kinds of khener—a "royal" khener (*ḫnr nsw*) associated with the king (and presumably linked with his palace in life and his mortuary temple in death), khener attached to the cults of various gods (such as Hathor, Bat, Wepwawet, Iunmutef,

[13] This type of figurine is identical with Pinch's type 1 (Pinch, *Votive Offerings*, 198–199) and Tooley's type III (Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 319–21).

[14] I was allowed access to the Asasif and Lisht archives during the course of a fellowship I held at the MMA from 2007–2008. I am extremely grateful to Dorothea Arnold, Christine Lilyquist, Marsha Hill, Catharine Roehrig, Diana Craig Patch, and to the other members of the Department of Egyptian Art for this privilege, and for their generosity, hospitality, insights, close reads on this paper, and help obtaining images. My thanks are also due to Denise Doxey and Larry Berman of the MFA Boston, who allowed me access to the unpublished records of the excavations undertaken by the Harvard-MFA Expedition at Naga el-Deir and Sheikh Farag.

[15] See Pinch, *Votive Offerings*, 221–25.

[16] D. Nord, "The Term *ḫnr*: 'Harem' or 'Musical Performers'?" in W. K. Simpson and W. M. Davis, eds., *Studies in Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Sudan. Essays in Honor of Dows Dunham on the Occasion of his 90*th *Birthday, June 1, 1980* (Boston, 1981), 141. The text appears as a caption above Hathoric dancers in the Old Kingdom tomb of Nebkauhor.

[17] Nord, "The Term *ḫnr*," 137–45.

[18] W. Ward, *Essays on Feminine Titles of the Middle Kingdom and Related Subjects* (Beirut, 1986), 57–80.

[19] Hayes, *Scepter I*, 219.

[20] Ward, *Essays*, 77. See also Nord, "The Term *ḫnr*," 142–43.

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and Min), and khener of the funerary estate (*pr-ḏt*) that performed in funerary contexts. It is likely, however, that membership in these various troupes often overlapped.[21]

Significantly, in royal or funerary contexts, the khener were occasionally depicted performing together with the daughters of the king or of the deceased, suggesting that their performance was intimately entwined with the ancestor cult, filial piety, and perhaps also with a mythic ritual re-enactment, in which the khener-dancer (along with or in lieu of the deceased's daughters) took on the role of Hathor, the sun-god's daughter-consort whose agency was instrumental in stimulating the sun's generative powers and his return to potency.[22] This theory that the genital exposure of the goddess was re-enacted in the course of the most acrobatic dances of the khener-women will be explored in greater depth below.

Certainly, considering Hathor's much vaunted patronage of music and dance and also her status as a mother goddess who facilitated rebirth, it is of little surprise that the deity most commonly invoked by khener-singers was Hathor, "the Golden One."[23] Texts mentioning the goddess commonly appear above the heads of singers, dancers, and musicians as simple denotative labels ("the khener of Hathor") or, more evocatively, in song (e.g., "Exalted is Hathor [goddess] of love").[24] The goddess's association with the royal mortuary cult extends back at least to the reign of Khaefre, when she was prominent in the king's mortuary temple, and it was not long before the elite were allowed to emulate this royal prerogative. By the reign of Khafre's son, the close connection between priestesses of Hathor and private mortuary cults was already established.[25]

Hathor continued to play a crucial role in royal as well as non-royal resurrection throughout the New Kingdom and well beyond. Priestesses of Hathor occasionally belonged to or oversaw khener-troupes, however, it appears that, more often, priestesses and members of khener-troupes complemented one another in the service of the goddess and of particularly well-endowed mortuary cults.[26] Priestesses of Hathor seem by and large to have enjoyed a loftier social status than khener-women. In numerous instances the former office was filled by royal princesses, who perhaps combined their cultic duties as priestesses of Hathor with their duty to propitiate the spirit of their royal father or grandfather—as Hathor once had—through dance, song, and ritual re-enactment.[27] Royal wives also occasionally served as priestesses of Hathor, although this office, in the Eleventh Dynasty at least, was held almost exclusively by the subsidiary wives of the king.[28] The important point to be made here, which shall serve as a preface to our first line of evidence, is that cults of Hathor were particularly associated with the royal mortuary cult and had been since their earliest attestation in the mid-Fourth Dynasty.

First Line of Evidence that Paddle Dolls Represented Khener-dancers: Location

Like many other genres of ancient Egyptian artifact, the paddle dolls in museum and private collections are often of obscure origin, having been purchased from antiquities dealers. Given the numerous excavations of First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom sites, however, it is still significant that

[21] Nord, "The Term *ḫnr*," 145.

[22] Nord, "The Term *ḫnr*," 145; Ward, *Essays*, 76; L. Kinney, *Dance, Dancers and the Performance Cohort in the Old Kingdom* (Oxford, 2008), 36; L. Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in Ancient Egyptian Myth and History* (Uppsala, 1986), 90–92.

[23] Nord, "The Term *ḫnr*," 141–42, 145.

[24] A. Blackman, *The Rock Tombs of Meir I. The Tomb-chapel of Ukh-hotp's Son Senbi* (London, 1914), 23.

[25] Z. Hawass, "The Programs of the Royal Funerary Complexes of the Fourth Dynasty," in D. O'Connor and D. P. Silverman, eds., *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, (Leiden, 1995), 223; R. A. Gillam, "Priestesses of Hathor: Their Function, Decline and Disappearance," *JARCE* 32 (1995), 212, 216, 226.

[26] Ward, *Essays*, 73.

[27] Gillam, "Priestesses," 214, 222, 227; Troy, *Patterns*, 73, 99–100, 154, 156.

[28] Gillam, "Priestesses," 222, 225; Troy, *Patterns*, 154, 156.

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the vast majority of paddle dolls discovered in situ—fully 81%—hail from the environs of Deir el-Bahari in Thebes. Of the paddle dolls that I was able to trace, all came from tombs, and the distribution broke down as follows: one came from Rifeh,[29] five from Sheikh Farag,[30] four from Naga el-Deir,[31] eleven from Beni Hasan,[32] and ninety two from both Asasif and a handful of nearby Theban tombs.[33] These numbers do not include dolls with tentative proveniences supplied by antiquities dealers, which have included Akhmim in addition to Thebes.[34] As Akhmim was home to a thriving cult of Hathor and to the only substantial grouping of priestesses of Hathor, lady of the sycamore, outside Memphis, paddle dolls might well have appeared in this venue. Given the importance of archaeological context to fully understanding the function and cultural meaning of these artifacts, however, this study focuses upon excavated paddle dolls.[35]

The predominance of Thebes, and particularly Asasif, in this sample is striking. While the majority of the tombs from which the paddle dolls came were closely clustered to the north and south of the causeway of Nebhepetre's funerary temple (see fig. 1), we know from the tomb of Unis-ankh (TT 413) that paddle dolls were manufactured in association with the local cult of Hathor prior to this king's reign.[36] Originating in the Memphite region in the mid-Fourth Dynasty, the cult of Hathor seems to have emerged as part and parcel of the cult of the divine king. Hathor's cult was thus only exported to the provinces in the late Old Kingdom, when the royal court shifted its focus from a strategy of ruling from and for the center to a strategy that sought to invest much more intensively in the provinces. As part of this project, which may have been undertaken in order to make the court more relevant to those that lived far outside Memphis and also to increase revenue, new towns were established, irrigation projects were undertaken, marriages were forged with provincial elites, attention was paid to provincial temples, ka-temples were erected to promote the worship of the divine king, and cults of Hathor were either newly established or much augmented.[37] The importation of Hathor to various key provinces seems to have been effected according to a time-honored tradition in Egypt, with the new goddess promptly assuming attributes of whatever local goddess had previously been most sacred

[29] Rifeh tomb 98 (W. M. F. Petrie, *Objects of Daily Use*, 59).

[30] BMFA 13.3567 was found in S.F. 8. BMFA 13.3603, BMFA 13.3604, and one additional paddle doll were discovered in S.F. 12. Unpublished excavation records housed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts indicate that an additional paddle doll was discovered in S.F. 25 in the same context as the modelled nude female figurine BMFA 13.3555. See also Memphis State University 1981.1.13, thought to come from Sheikh Farag, and mentioned by Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 312.

[31] BMFA 47.1691 was found in N 232, while 47.1692 and 47.1693 were found in N 428. Unpublished excavation records housed in the MFA indicate that another doll was discovered in tomb 449 chamber C.

[32] At Beni Hassan the tombs in which paddle dolls were found are 01, 09, 23, 106, 117, 424, 511, 546, 556 (according to Garstang, *Burial Customs*, 211–12, 216, 225, 229, and Tooley "Middle Kingdom," 313). Priestesses of Hathor are attested at Beni Hasan in Dyn. 6 and 11 (M. Galvin, "Priests and Priestesses of Hathor in the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period," PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1981, 45).

[33] The Asasif tombs in which a total of sixty five paddle dolls were found are 101, 104, 110, 111, 126, 132, 510, 511, 601, 602, 604, 801, 806, 811, 813, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 822, 826, 828, 830, 839, 1112. Information on these tombs may be found in the archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Nearby Theban tombs from which a total of twenty seven paddle dolls were excavated are TT 413 (M. Saleh, *Three Old Kingdom Tombs at Thebes, 1: The Tomb of Unas-Ankh, no. 413; 2: The Tomb of Khenty, no. 405; 3: The Tomb of Ihy, no. 186*, Mainz, 1977), the Ramesseum tomb (J. E. Quibell, *The Ramesseum* [with *The Tomb of Ptah-hetep*], London, 1896), Moller's tomb 35 (R. Anthes, "Die deutschen Grabungen auf der Westseite von Theben in den Jahren 1911 und 1913," *MDAIK* 12, [1943], 4–15, Abb. 10), and two at Dra' Abu el-Naga (shaft tomb K02.1; U. Rummel, *Meeting the Past. 100 Years in Egypt. German Archaeological Institute Cairo 1907–2007, Catalogue of the Special Exhibition in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo [19th November, 2007 to 15th January, 2008*], Cairo 2007, 35).

[34] Tooley "Middle Kingdom," 312.

[35] L. Keimer, *Remarques sur le Tatouage dans l'Egypte ancienne* (Cairo, 1948), 27–28, figs. 18–19, pl. 17, studied three of the six paddle dolls that were reported by an antiquities dealer to have come from Akhmim. For the cult of Hathor at Akhmim and to the resident khener-troupes, see Galvin, "Priests," 243 and Nord, "The Term *ḫnr*," 145.

[36] M. Saleh, "The Tomb of Wnsj-'nh at Qurna (PM-No. 413)," *MDAIK* 26 (1970), 206, pl. 77.

[37] Gillam "Priestesses," 226–31.

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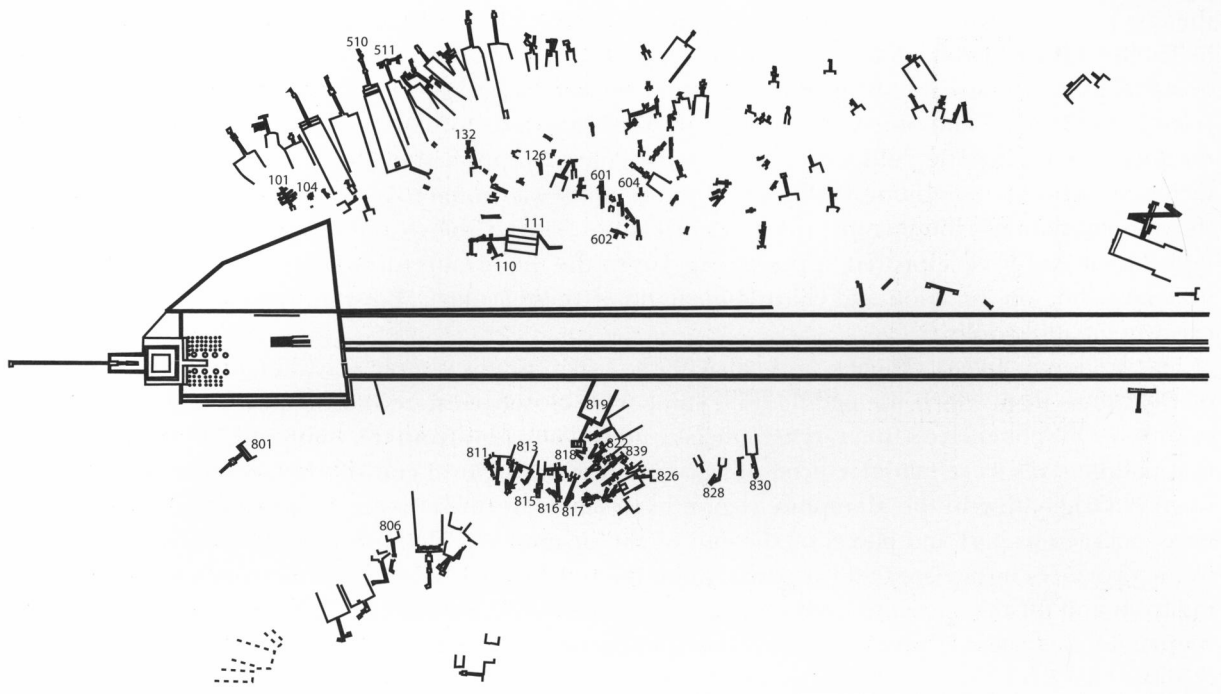

Fig. 1. The spatial distribution of the paddle dolls at Asasif (after the MMA Expedition plan of Asasif).

to the site.[38] In Thebes, judging from later representations of the Hathor cow emerging from desert cliffs, the cult of Hathor, mistress of the desert (*nbt smit*), had been melded onto a pre-existing cult of a mountain goddess and patron of the necropolis such as Mertseger, Amentet, or perhaps a local goddess sacred to the area of Asasif specifically.[39]

Significantly, the only firmly attested Sixth Dynasty Theban priestesses of Hathor were two women buried on the southern slope of Khokha-hill, just south of the Asasif tombs flanking Nebhepetre's mortuary temple. A contemporary tomb, located in the same grouping as those belonging to the two priestesses, likely housed a third priestess of Hathor and her husband, Unis-ankh (TT 413).[40] This tomb will be discussed at greater length below, for not only was this the earliest tomb in which a paddle doll has been discovered, but it also included scenes of nude and scantily clad females dancing with mirrors to the accompaniment of harpists. As mirrors and harps were both characteristically associated with the performances of khener-women and are also found interred together with paddle dolls, the scene is interesting both for its content and its early date. Nebhepetre never explicitly states that he chose to situate his mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahari because of its status as an area sacred to Hathor, however, given the long-standing role of this goddess in royal cult complexes generally and at Deir el-Bahari in particular, this would make sense.

As is evident from other contexts, Nebhepetre seems to have held a particular affection for Hathor, perhaps prompted in part by the fact that Ioh, who was likely his mother, was a priestess of Hathor in addition to being a "daughter of the king's body."[41] Nebhepetre made his allegiance to the god-

[38] Gillam "Priestesses," 218.
[39] C. J. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth* (Leiden, 1973), 42–43.
[40] The tombs of the Sixth Dynasty Hathor priestesses and of Unis-ankh are published together in Saleh, *Three Old Kingdom*.
[41] Troy, *Patterns*, 73.

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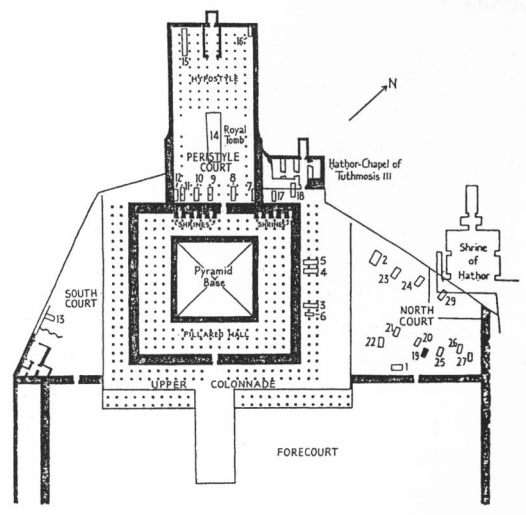

Fig. 2. Detail of the burials within Nebhepetre's temple (after MMA Theban Expedition II: XI Dynasty Intramural Tombs. n.d. unpublished, 139).

dess clear through his extensive work on her temple at Dendera, which showcased scenes of himself being suckled by Hathor; similarly, he referred to himself her "son" in two of his inscriptions at Gebelein.[42] The sycamores that fronted Nebhepetre's temple at Deir el-Bahari were no doubt planted to honor the goddess.[43] The temple's location in alignment with the temple of Amun at Karnak across the river was another factor, presumably engineered so that the divine patron of kingship could visit the goddess during the Beautiful Festival of the Valley and renew his identification with Nebhepetre even in death. The fact that many of the king's statues are portrayed in Sed robes suggests that the king may also have intended to celebrate millions of Sed-festivals at Deir el-Bahari, and Hathor certainly was a traditionally active participant in Sed-festival rites.[44] In Nebhepetre's project of re-invigorating the cult of divine kingship and also ensuring his own successful deification after death, then, Hathor played an essential role.

According to Dieter Arnold, the king seems to have begun his mortuary temple-complex sometime after his fourteenth year but prior to his reunification of the country. Among the first archaeologically recoverable features of the complex were the king's original dromos tomb (the Bab el-Hoson) and the six statue-shrines with six associated subterranean crypts (numbers 7, 9, 10, 11 17 and 18—see fig. 2),[45] each dedicated to a wife (*ḥmt nsw*), who also held the title of priestess of Hathor (*ḥmt-nṯr ḥwt-ḥr*) and sole royal ornament (*ḫkrt nsw wʿtt*).[46] These women uniformly died young, and one—Myt—died exceptionally young, being between three to five years of age at death. Moreover, these priestess-wives were all interred prior to the next phase of the temple's construction, which took place after the unification of the country. Their ages and the conscious uniformity of their chapels and tombs led more than one early scholar to suggest that the women had been slain together in order to serve the intertwined cults of the king and Hathor for eternity.[47] While an examination of one of these women has revealed that she died in childbirth rather than as a victim of retainer sacrifice, the core idea is still solid. These women had been buried in the temple precinct in virtually identical pre-prepared tombs in order to serve as cultic officiants ever after. Indeed, as is often

[42] L. Habachi, "King Nebhepetre Menthuhotp: His Monuments, Place in History, Deification and Unusual Representations in the Form of Gods," *MDAIK* 19 (1963), 19–28, 39–40.

[43] Winlock, *Excavations*, 49–51.

[44] E. F. Wente, "Hathor at the Jubilee," in E. B. Hauser, ed., *Fs Wilson*, 83–91.

[45] Di. Arnold, *Der Tempel des Konigs Mentuhotep von Deir el-Bahari I* (Mainz, 1974), 64.

[46] These titles were attested for all of the women except for Myt, buried in tomb 5. Given the uniformity of the shrine-burial arrangements, however, there is a good possibility that Myt had been dedicated to the goddess and to the king even before reaching the age at which taking on full cultic responsibilities and consummating a marriage would be appropriate. She may perhaps have been a daughter of Nebhepetre, destined to be a priestess of Hathor by virtue of her royal birth. See E. Naville, *The XIth Dynasty Temple at Deir el-Bahari II*, 6–9; also Winlock, *Excavations*, 36–46; L. K. Sabbahy, "The Titulary of the Harem of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep, Once Again," *JARCE* 34 (1997), 163–66.

[47] See Naville, *Deir el-Bahari II*, 7.

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noted, the primary title these women showcased in both their shrines and their tombs was priestess of Hathor, not royal wife.[48]

Interestingly, prior to becoming one of Nebhepetre's chief queens, Nefru bore the titles "sole royal ornament" and "priestess of Hathor." Perhaps hers by birthright as a King's daughter, these two titles were nonetheless excluded from her tomb and burial equipment. Instead, they were discovered—without her title of queen—as marks on linen from Asasif tomb 101, a tomb belonging to four adults, one ten year-old, and a younger child. This tomb contained within it typically Eleventh Dynasty material culture (such as pottery, clay offering trays, weapons, and wooden models) and, perhaps significantly, a paddle doll. Whether the inhabitants of the tomb were family or long-time colleagues of Nefru is unclear, but given Nefru's royal blood, the latter is perhaps more likely.[49] If so, the presence of children is again interesting for, as is discussed below, young girls were often associated with khener-troupes.

Aside from the tombs of the six priestess-wives, Nebhepetre provided his queen Tem, the mother of his heir, with a tomb located in the temple proper. There were also a number of other tombs prepared for women within the temple (i.e., tombs 3, 4, 5, and 12).[50] As opposed to the tombs of the priestesses, these crypts were created after the temple had been built for women whose titles or cultic functions, if they held any, are unknown. This group, like that of the priestesses and also the group buried together with queen Nefru's linens, also included a young girl (buried in tomb 5), who, like many of her colleagues, was evidently richly equipped at the time of burial.

If the spirits of the six priestess-wives were meant to staff the temple, they may have been aided in their duties by the women discussed above and also by the spirits of those interred in the north triangular side courtyard of the temple precinct. A few of the graves of women buried in this section of the cemetery will be discussed more extensively in the following section, but for now it can be stated that this restricted cemetery incorporated some twelve graves, five of which were definitely for women and at least two of which housed men. Rampant plundering obscured the identities of many of those buried in this area. It is interesting, however, that although the men were adults, neither was richly equipped. On the whole, the women were interred with a great many more grave goods, not only with respect to jewellery but also to gender neutral items such as funerary models and pottery.

As will be discussed below, two of these women (found in graves 23 and 26) were tattooed, and they may have been joined by a third colleague, if the last known "Sole Royal Ornament, Priestess of Hathor," Amunet, was indeed buried in tomb 25.[51] The mention of numerous "royal ornaments" of Nebhepetre on Amunet's linens (such as his daughter Ideh and his ladies Menet and Tenenat) may betray the identity of some of the seemingly untitled women discussed above.[52] According to Lana Troy, the title "sole royal ornament" bore a frequent relationship to the cult of Hathor in other contexts as well, and this point will be returned to below in our discussion of khener-dancers and mirrors, for a mirror could be used as the determinative for the word "ornament" (*ḫkrt*).[53] As Angela Tooley has noted, it is unlikely to be a coincidence that the title *ḫkrt nsw wʿtt* reached the peak of its prevalence in

[48] Ward, *Essays*, 110–11; Sabbahy, "Titulary," 164.

[49] Ward, *Essays*, 113.

[50] Tombs 6 and 8 were never finished. Information on these tombs can be found in the archives at the MMA, in Winlock, *Rise and Fall*, 42–44, and in E. Naville, *The XIth Dynasty Temple at Deir el-Bahari I*, 43–47, 51.

[51] The other possibilities for Amunet's burial are tombs 4 and 5 in the temple proper, however, given the fact that the burial in 5 belonged to a female who was "quite young" and that two other tattooed women were found in the triangular court, tomb 25 is perhaps the most likely possibility (Winlock, *Rise and Fall*, 43).

[52] Ward, *Essays*, 108.

[53] Troy, *Patterns*, 73, 78; H. G. Fischer, *Dendera*, 136, n. 591; C. Lilyquist, *Ancient Egyptian Mirrors: From the Earliest Times through the Middle Kingdom* (Berlin, 1979), 98.

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Eleventh Dynasty Thebes, right at the point when the cult of Hathor was ascendant at Deir el-Bahari and when paddle dolls appeared en masse in the graves surrounding it.[54]

Nebhepetre, in planning out his funerary complex, evidently decided to have his mortuary temple staffed with priestesses of Hathor and with the other women and men who would see to its proper functioning throughout eternity. The likely counterpart to the priestesses in a functioning temple would be the khener, and we know of khener-troupes that performed regularly in the mortuary temples at Abusir and Lahun in the Old and Middle Kingdoms respectively.[55] It is likely that at least some of these khener-performers were among those buried in the triangular court of Nebhepetre's temple at Deir el-Bahari and perhaps in its interior as well. Given our secondary thesis that the tattooed and truncated Middle Kingdom female figurines are descendant from paddle dolls, it should be noted that the vast majority of the provenienced figurines of this type were excavated at three sites: Asasif, Lisht, and Lahun.[56] These three sites, of course, are primarily defined by their association with a royal mortuary temple.

Second Line of Evidence: Tattoos

The grave of the Priestess of Hathor and Sole Royal Ornament Amunet occasioned great excitement when found for her body was festooned with tattoos. The excavation was one of the first to occur at Deir el-Bahari, however, and despite the excitement, knowledge of where she had lain was later lost. It is thus not certain whether she was buried within the temple proper or in the triangular north courtyard. Her title might suggest the former, though the presence of other tattooed women in the courtyard would make her an easy fit in this venue as well. Winlock believed that her burial would most likely have been situated in the northernmost corner of the north triangular court. Regardless, the salient point is that this abundantly tattooed lady—depicted (with tattoos covered) in scenes within the temple proper, interred in a fine painted coffin, and bedecked with elaborate funerary necklaces and collars—was a priestess of Hathor attached to the mortuary temple of Nebhepetre.[57] It is therefore likely that the two other women in the north triangular court whose bodies also bore tattoos served in a similar cultic capacity.

Given that tattooed mummies in Egypt are an exceptional find, the tattoos of Amunet and her companions were carefully drawn and photographed. The three bore aniconic tattoos on their thighs, chest, shoulders, arms, abdomens, and even feet composed of lines, dashes, and dots.[58] The tattoos of the two women from the courtyard were particularly interesting, for they bore on their chest and upper arms the exact type of diamond-shaped dot configurations as were discovered on the shoulders, thighs, and/or buttocks of at least three paddle dolls from tomb 816 at Deir el-Bahari (MMA 31.3.35; 31.3.37; and JE 56274) and on the arms of a paddle doll discovered in Moller's tomb 35, located less than a mile to the south at Qurneh (JE 43088). The same design is also discovered on the thighs of a truncated faience figurine, discovered at Asasif in tomb 518, which belonged to the bowman Neferhotep (JE 47710), on a truncated female figurine discovered in tomb 809 (MMA 14.1.416), as well as on the lower half of another faience figurine (MMA 15.10.93-deaccessioned) from Asasif tomb 828 (see fig. 3). This last fragmentary figurine, which like the other two bore the design of a cowrie-shell girdle about her waist, was discovered along with five paddle dolls and two wooden female figurines (MMA

[54] Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 324.
[55] B. Bryan, "The Etymology of *ḫnr* 'Group of Musical Performers,'" *BES* 4 (1982), 38, n. 21; Ward, *Essays*, 77.
[56] Pinch, *Votive*, 226–27.
[57] L. Keimer, *Remarques*, 8–13, pls. 1–5; Winlock, *Rise and Fall*, 43.
[58] Keimer, *Remarques*, 8–15, pls. 1–9; Winlock, *Excavations*, 74.

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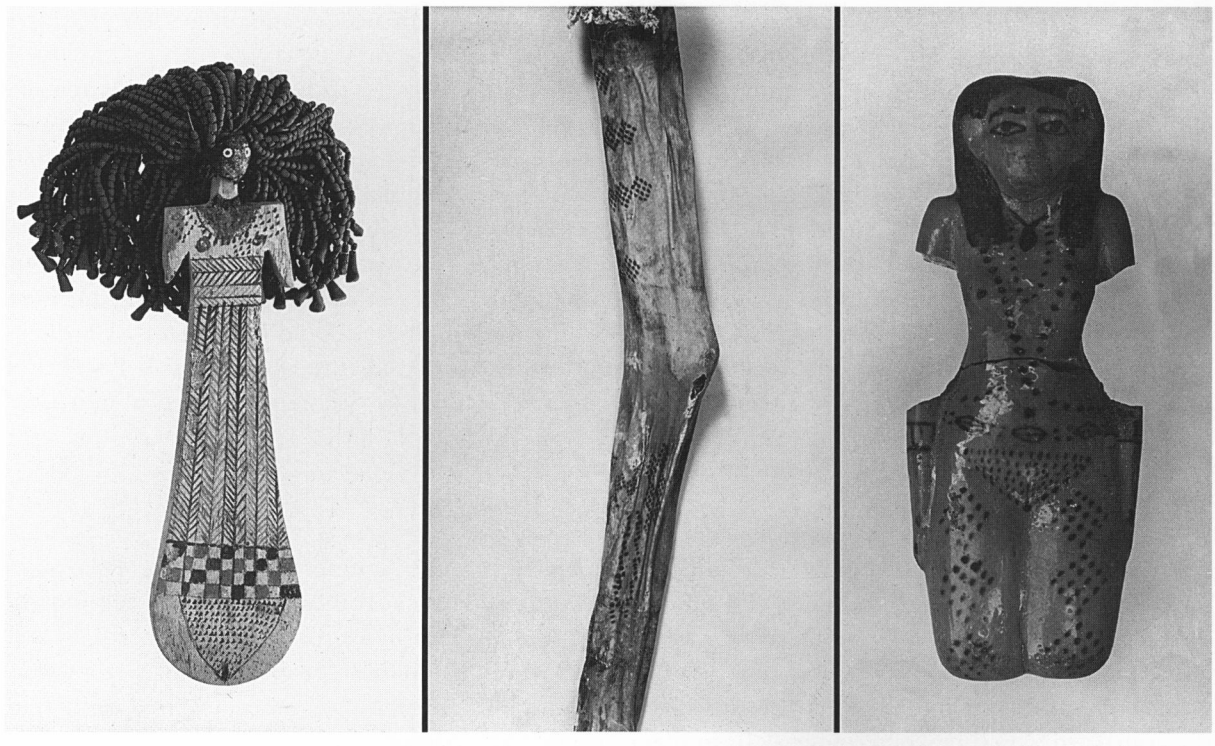

Fig. 3. Tattoos on a paddle doll excavated in Asasif tomb 816 (JE 56274); tattoos on the arm of a woman buried in the North Court of Nebhepetre's mortuary temple; and a figurine discovered in Asasif tomb 518 (JE 47710). Photographs courtesy of the MMA.

15.10.94, 15.10.95-deaccessioned), one of whom also had been provided with a painted girdle and other decorative jewelry.[59]

Diamond or lozenge tattoos are known from two nearly contemporary contexts, outside the corpus previously discussed. First, females whose bodies bore much the same type of tattoos as those discovered on the women from Asasif were interred at Kubban and Hierakonpolis in conjunction with typical C-Group assemblages.[60] These distinctive diamond-shaped designs have also been discovered on Nubian fertility figurines. One excavated example from Toshka is especially interesting, as it depicts a female with the truncated arms typical of paddle dolls and a pointed neck that looks very much like the necks of those paddle dolls that no longer possessed the head and elaborate hairstyle that had been fashioned for them of other materials.[61] Diamond-shaped punctate designs decorating the abdomen of the Toshka figure and were also arranged in a girdle-like patterning around its hips. This arrangement resembles the description of the female mummies in tombs 23 and 26, who possessed tattoos "below the waist and above the buttocks, where anything in the nature of a belt or a girdle would naturally hang."[62] The visibility of Nubian styles in the court of Nebhepetre has been much discussed, and

[59] For the Asasif paddle dolls, see MMA tomb cards 2559–2562. For the Qurneh paddle doll, see Keimer *Remarques*, 29. For Neferhotep's doll, see Winlock, *Excavations*, pl. 35. For the Asasif figurines in tomb 809 and 828, see MMA tomb cards 2424 and 2816 respectively.

[60] K. W. Poon and T. I. Quickenden, "A Review of Tattooing in Ancient Egypt," *BACE* 17 (2006), 127–28.

[61] H. Junker, "Toschke, Bericht über die Grabungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien auf dem Friedhof von Toschke (Nubien) im Winter 1911/12," *DAWW* 68/1 (Vienna, 1926), 75, pl. 11/55, 24/413. The figurine is Kunsthistorische Museum no. 7326. See also Keimer *Remarques*, 37–38, figs. 30–37.

[62] MMA tomb card 100.

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Fig. 4. Dancer in the tomb of Wah-ka II at Qau (after Petrie, Antaeopolis, pl. 24).

this co-occurrence of bodily decoration in the Theban court and in Nubia need not be a coincidence. Indeed, if the performances in the Hathor temple re-enacted this goddess' return from Nubia and subsequent pacification, Nubian dancers would have been particularly appropriate performers.

Winlock's original idea that paddle dolls and figurines with diamond-shaped tattoos represented "dancing girls" was reinforced by Petrie's publication of a woman depicted on the wall of the Twelfth Dynasty tomb of Wah-ka II at Qau (see fig. 4). Depicted airborne, bent backwards in mid flip, with her feet arched over her head, there is no doubt that the nude woman with diamond tattoos ornamenting her hips was a dancer, and a particularly acrobatic one at that.[63] Although the painting is damaged, it is

[63] W. M. F. Petrie, *Antaeopolis: The Tombs of Qau* (London, 1930), pl. 24. A triangular tattoo made up of dots is seen on a similar acrobatic dancer from the New Kingdom, discovered on an ostraca at Deir el-Medina (Poon and Quickenden, "Review," 126–27, fig. 4).

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possible to discern a second dancer performing a similar flip immediately below. The better preserved dancer wore an elaborate beaded girdle, anklets, and necklaces, and the singers were adorned similarly, also apparently naked save for their collar, menat-necklace, and other jewelery.

The stripe-and-dot tattoos discovered on Amunet and her companions, although less distinctive than the diamonds and lozenges, also have parallels on paddle dolls.[64] Of particular interest as well are the more figural tattoo designs. One of the paddle dolls found in Moller's Qurneh tomb 35 (JE 43088) possessed diamond shaped tattoo designs on her arms but also other presumed tattoos including a lion, two dogs, a caprid, and a knife-wielding Ipi-Taweret. This guardian hippopotamus deity appears on numerous magical knives, at least one of which was found in the same tomb as a paddle doll,[65] and she ornaments other paddle dolls of less secure or unknown provenience.[66] Geraldine Pinch has suggested that the Ipi-Taweret tattoo may have been thought to safeguard the health of a foetus, given that in the celestial realm the hippopotamus goddess protected the infant sun god.[67] It is interesting, however, that the sole provenienced example of a paddle doll with such a tattoo came not from Asasif, but from a tomb of varied date located in the general vicinity. Other motifs discovered on unprovenienced paddle dolls include a crocodile (or perhaps a centipede) and a monkey.[68]

The presence of bird designs on paddle dolls at Asasif and on the upper arm of a tattooed corpse is especially important for the argument that the paddle dolls were modelled on cultic performers associated with the royal mortuary cult. In Asasif tomb 818 archaeologists discovered a tomb with two paddle dolls, including one (MMA 31.3.43) that bore three birds depicted on her body, one on the front of each thigh and another on what looks to have been the small of her back. A tattoo design of a bird was also found on the back of another paddle doll discovered nearby in tomb 815 and is also witnessed on the reverse of a paddle doll from Sheikh Farag tomb 12 (BMFA 13.3603).[69]

While no bird tattoos were recognized on the women buried in association with Nebhepetre's temple, an intriguing corpse was discovered in a tomb excavated in the platform of the aborted mortuary complex that neighbored Nebhepetre's to the south. The original working hypothesis was that the platform for this structure dated to Nebhepetre's successor Sankhkare, but Dorothea Arnold has argued that the temple was started and then abandoned by Amenemhet I prior to his move to Lisht.[70] In grave 1008 on the temple platform, the excavators discovered a body with a tattoo located half way between its right shoulder and elbow. This tattoo depicted two birds—to all appearances extremely similar to those discovered on the paddle doll from tomb 818. Excavators believed that the tomb assemblage dated primarily to the Second Intermediate Period and Early Eighteenth Dynasty, however, the similarity between the tattoo and the design painted on the paddle dolls from Asasif is striking (see fig. 5), as is the fact that the body came from a grave excavated on a temple platform. These factors, in conjunction with the nature of some of the artifact assemblage, suggest that the later cultural material may have been mixed in with material from a burial contemporary with the platform.[71]

[64] Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 308.

[65] Quibell, *Ramesseum*, pl. 3.2. A magic knife with Taweret on it (MMA 22.1.153) was also discovered in Lisht tomb 885 together with a truncated female figurine (MMA 22.1.180).

[66] One doll may have come from Akhmim (Keimer, *Remarques*, pl. 16) and another from excavations at Sheikh Farag (BMFA 13.5100), while entirely unprovenienced dolls bearing Ipi-Taweret include Brooklyn 1.37.100; British Museum 6459, 6464, 22627, 23071, and 23074.

[67] Pinch, *Votive*, 217.

[68] Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 311.

[69] MMA tomb cards 2609 (for tomb 818) and 2526 (for tomb 815). A paddle doll purchased in Akhmim was similarly decorated with one large bird on the front and two on the back (Keimer, *Remarques*, pl. 16).

[70] Do. Arnold, "Amenemhat I and the Early Twelfth Dynasty at Thebes," *MMJ* 26 (1991), 14, 18.

[71] Information on this tomb comes from Photo M5C-153 and tomb cards 3284 and 3287. Some of the artifacts found within, such as sandals and hair extensions, are known from Asasif tombs that also contained paddle dolls. Sandals were found with

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Fig. 5. Tattoo on the mummy recovered from Asasif 1008 and a paddle doll with bird tattoos (Asasif 818. MMA 31.3.43. Rogers Fund, 1931). Photograph courtesy of the MMA.

The tombs on and adjacent to Nebhepetre's temple platform that we have discussed were provided with much of the same furnishings as co-occured with the paddle dolls elsewhere in the cemetery (such as funerary models, offering trays, weapons, and cosmetic containers). This is the only area of the main Middle Kingdom cemetery surrounding the complex, however, in which female figurines were *not* found. Given that elsewhere in the Metropolitan Museum's concession, paddle dolls alone occur in just over a quarter of the burials, the absence of figurines from all of these graves is indeed significant. What appears likely, then, is that the oft-tattooed women buried in the north triangular court and some of their counterparts buried within the temple proper did not need paddle dolls because they *were* paddle dolls—or rather the khener-women the paddle dolls portrayed.

Third Line of Evidence: Genital Exposure

In her 1953 study of female figurines, Christine Desroches Noblecourt persuasively argued that the cross-shaped tattoo designs discovered on numerous Middle Kingdom truncated and nude female figurines correlated with the cross-marks depicted on the upper bodies of partially clothed women engaged in mortuary rituals in some New Kingdom tomb paintings. These scenes depict female relatives of the deceased engaged in a rite in which at least two of the women were explicitly identified with

paddle dolls in tombs 111, 813, 819, 822, and 839, but they also appeared as part of the equipment of women buried in Nebhepetre's temple precinct (e.g., tombs 7, belonging to the Priestess-wife Sadhe, and 29). Hair extensions were found in tombs 815, 828, and 839 and in only a single tomb (115) that did not possess a paddle doll. Indeed, the paddle doll with the bird tattoo design in tomb 815 was discovered with "several bundles of false hair" (Winlock, *Excavations*, 206).

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Isis and Nephthys (the so-called *dryt*). Desroches Noblecourt argues that the women channelling the divine sisters, or at least the woman who enacted the role of Isis, utilized sexuality to stimulate the dead man's procreative powers and thus revive him and restore him back to potency in a rite analogous to the "opening of the mouth" ceremony.[72] Whether this practice was a forerunner to that performed by "two women beautiful of body . . . with writing on their arms, to wit the names of Isis and Nephthys," as described in the Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys, is not known.[73]

Such cross tattoo designs did not adorn the excavated paddle dolls from Asasif, although at least one paddle doll decorated in such a fashion is said to have come from Thebes.[74] Cross tattoos were, however, discovered on female figurines interred in tombs together with paddle dolls at Asasif. For instance, in Asasif tomb 602 a paddle doll (MMA 26.3.323-deacessioned) was discovered together with two limestone female figurines, one of which was nude, decorated with crosses, and possessed the truncated legs typical of the genre (MMA 26.3.327). Likewise, a paddle doll discovered in Ramesseum Tomb 5 (Manchester 1832), quite near to Asasif, shared its tomb with three female figurines that bore cross tattoo designs (Manchester 1788, 1789, 1794).[75]

As has been touched upon above and will be discussed at length below, the quintessentially Middle Kingdom nude female figurine, with her tattoos and truncated legs, bears many similarities to the paddle doll in terms of bodily form, decoration, and adornment as well as archaeological find spots and contexts. Thus the fact that paddle dolls and female figurines with cross tattoos have been found together suggests that the two may have served a complimentary function—a plausible suggestion given the ever emphasized duality of the Osirian and Solar visions of the afterlife. Certainly, if the female figurines with cross-tattoos represented female relatives of the deceased engaged in the ritual re-enactment of Isis's mythological role vis à vis Osiris, the role that the paddle dolls played may have been reminiscent of that performed by priestesses of Hathor and the khener in the royal mortuary temples and at Sed-festivals with respect to Re (the dead king).[76]

Priestesses of Hathor were often the daughters or female descendents of the monarchs whose cult temples they were attached to and whose souls they were in charge of restoring and refreshing. In this role, they mirrored Hathor and her relationship with her father, the sun-god Re. Because one of the quintessential ways to channel the goddesses and to honor her was to dance, these priestesses were aided in their work by professional cultic dancers, some of whom had the skills necessary to do the sorts of backflips performed by the nearly naked, tattooed dancer in Wah-ka II's tomb at Qau, for example. Nebhepetre's statues betray his intention to celebrate his Sed-festival at his temple eternally. At least one of his daughters, Ideh, who bore the Hathoric title "sole royal ornament," likely aided him in this process, perhaps in tandem with her tattooed fellow-Ornament and Priestess of Hathor Amunet. Their restorative rites may well have been memorialized or harnessed in the persons of the paddle dolls.

It has often been remarked that the cultic dancers who performed in honor of Hathor were both scantily clad and "acrobatic."[77] Often, these women wore a very short cloth around their waists which would, presumably, have left little to the imagination when they performed their backbends and high-kicks in the course of their dances. We know that unlike most other dance moves, the revealing high-kicks and backbends were performed solely by women, indicating that the type of genitalia thereby

[72] See C. Desroches-Noblecourt, " 'Concubines du Mort' et mères de famille au Moyen Empire," *BIFAO* (1953), 15–43, and the discussions in Pinch, *Votive*, 214–15 and Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 333–34.

[73] See R. O. Faulkner, "The Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys," in *Mélanges Maspero I* (Cairo, 1934), 341.

[74] See Royal Museum of Scotland 1911284, depicted in Bourriau, *Pharaohs*, 126–27, no. 121.

[75] Quibell, *Ramesseum*, pl. 3; B. J. Kemp et al., *Minoan Pottery in Second Millennium Egypt* (Mainz, 1980), 166.

[76] Tooley "Middle Kingdom," 335–36. Wente, "Hathor," 90.

[77] Bleeker, *Hathor*, 57–58; E. Brunner-Traut, *Der Tanz im Alten Aegypten* (Glückstadt, 1938), 23–24; Kinney, *Dance*, 157–63.

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exposed was of importance. Further, from the songs written above the heads of the dancers, it is clear that this genre of dance most often honored Hathor. The lyrics of the song in Kagemni's tomb, which captioned the earliest and most energetic high-kick dance, are particularly interesting: "Hathor (appears) at the portal of the East. 'Greetings to her' say the gods. 'Greetings to you' says Re. 'My image is united.'"[78] The "uniting" of Re and Hathor in the Ptolemaic Period was a cultic event of utmost importance held annually at Dendera. Temple texts reveal that at the most climactic moment of the rite—through an act of unveiling—Hathor "unites (her) rays with (those) of her father in the horizon."[79]

The lyrics in Kagemni's tomb and the rite at Dendera likely both refer to the same mythic happening, detailed in The Contendings of Horus and Seth. Although this text is preserved in its entirety in a Ramesside papyrus, an extremely similar version was in circulation already by the Middle Kingdom.[80] At one point in this long and winding tale, the goddess Hathor performs the vital service of reviving the sun god, who was at that point lying dormant on his back, closed in a tent and unable to perform his functions. She accomplishes this feat by revealing her genitals to her father, occasioning a laugh, which revived the god, such that he was able to rise, re-enter the divine community, and resume his essential role of cosmic judge. As discussed extensively elsewhere,[81] this seemingly tangential episode of the myth seems to have served as etiology for why cultic performers and other women ritually revealed themselves in honor of the goddess. Certainly, as we know from later sources—such as Herodotus, a lurid Persian period bowl, and myriad figurines—rites of exposure were closely associated with cultic ceremonies and celebrations honouring Hathor and her divine affiliates.

Nebhepetre's chancellor, a man named Khety, included a hymn in his tomb at Asasif that simultaneously celebrated the love of Hathor and Re and emphasized its importance to the revivification of the king. The text, which might well have read as a script to a re-enacted mythic flash, states, "The Golden One has appeared at the prow of the (sun) barque, Re loves her! (Power of) powers in the Day Barque, Re loves her! Your might has reached the Aegean isles, Re loves her! Re has come forth that he may see your beauty, Re loves her! Let (King) Menuhotep be protected, by Hathor, by Hathor!"[82] If Nebhepetre was identified in death with Re, as this and a myriad of other texts suggest, the priestesses and cultic dancers interred within his burial monument to perform for him in perpetuity played the role of Hathor to their solar father. Part of this role would likely have been to re-enact the cultic flash that so revitalized the sun god—effectively bringing him back from a dangerous, deathlike dormancy to life. This flash would quite naturally have been accomplished as part and parcel of a revealing cultic dance.

Women engaged in backbends, known from contemporary models and numerous two-dimensional representations, may well have been performing solar dances, for as a result of this pose their genitalia faced upward towards the sun.[83] This may also have been the intent of the high kicks. One Old Kingdom caption to a typically revealing high kick dance reads, "Behold! The secret of the khener-women" (*mk sšt3 ḫnr(w)t*).[84] Within the context of the song, the connection of the dancers to the profession of midwifery is intimated, however, if taken more literally, the secret of the khener-women—visually

[78] Kinney, *Dance*, 157.

[79] Bleeker, *Hathor*, 89.

[80] R. B. Parkinson, *Voices from Ancient Egypt. An Anthology of Middle Kingdom Writings* (Norman, 1991), 120–21.

[81] E. F. Morris, "Sacred and Obscene Laughter in The Contendings of Horus and Seth, in Egyptian Inversions of Everyday Life, and in the Context of Cultic Competition," in T. Schneider and K. Szpakowska, eds., *Egyptian Stories: A British Egyptological Tribute to Alan B. Lloyd* (Münster, 2007), 197–224.

[82] K. A. Kitchen, *Poetry of Ancient Egypt* (Åström, 1999), 115.

[83] See, for example, Brooklyn Museum 13.1024, which was discovered in tomb D303 at Abydos and dates to the Middle Kingdom, or the very similar limestone statuette Berlin Museum 14202. These are published in J. H. Breasted, *Egyptian Servant Statues* (New York, 1948), 89–90, pls. 84 and 85a, respectively. See also Peet, *Cemeteries of Abydos III*, 27, pl. 9.2.

[84] Kinney, *Dance*, 159.

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revealed by the high kick—would have further heightened the intimate interweaving of the identities of the dancers with that of Hathor, the Lady of the Vulva (*nbt ḥtpt*).[85]

The linked arguments have already been mounted that the location of the vast majority of the excavated paddle dolls in the vicinity of Nebhepetre's mortuary temple and the resemblance of the paddle doll tattoo designs to tattoos found on the bodies of the Hathoric functionaries buried within the complex strongly suggest that the paddle dolls should be interpreted as the khener-dancers of the goddess, employed at the temple. As in other venues, these performers no doubt danced for Hathor but also *as* her, channelling the goddess in cultic performance through the principle of embodiment.[86] A further line of evidence supporting the equation of paddle dolls with khener-performers, then, is the extraordinary prominence given to the pubic triangle in the decoration of this genre of figurine.

The pubic triangles are the one constant in the iconic repertoire of the paddle dolls; otherwise the patterns of the dresses and bodily markings (if present) differ from figurine to figurine. The genitals, however, are prominently featured and have always presented an embarrassing impediment to those who have wished to interpret them as dolls, pure and simple. The privileging of the genitals over the legs has also troubled those who have wished to view the paddle dolls as dancers.[87] If the primary purpose of the Hathoric dance was to have the khener-woman, who danced as Hathor, expose her genitals in order to revivify the sun-god-king, then it is only fitting that it is precisely the genitals that should be most prominently displayed in the depictions of these dancers.

As will be discussed below, the dress of the paddle dolls is reminiscent of the full length dresses of the khener-women depicted in the tomb of Kenamun (TT 93). Further it is fascinating that on many decorated paddle dolls, the buttocks are covered by the fabric of their dress, as if to suggest that this flash was an intentional cultic act—the act of anasyrmenê (skirt-raising), likely celebrated as the culmination of the "union of Hathor and Re" at Hathor temples, solar temples, and at royal mortuary temples throughout Egypt (see fig. 6).[88] Certainly, in all these types of temples, Hathor played a vital—and a revitalizing—cosmic role.[89]

Given the association of rites of exposure with mortuary temples, it is perhaps interesting to point towards a manifestation of this rite in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari. Although this temple neighbored and emphatically emulated Nebhepetre's temple, the incorporation of chapels to both Hathor and Re was an innovation. A painted relief from this later temple, copied in the 19th century and subsequently either lost or damaged, reveals two young princesses depicted completely nude except for their ornaments. Neferure, who was clearly the most prominent princess, carries a menat necklace and wears a girdle, broad collar, cross-over bands, armlets, bracelets, and anklets—jewelry very similar to that depicted on the paddle dolls and on the rendering of khener-women in the tomb of Kenamun, discussed below. Like Re and Nebhepetre before her, then, Hatshepsut required the time-hallowed efforts of princess-performers to enable her to rise again.[90]

The paddle dolls discovered at Asasif, it is here argued, represent the khener-performers who routinely revitalized the king. While Nebhepetre's temple actively functioned, they may have been given or sold to Thebans and to visitors who attended the temple rites or took part in its rituals, thereby

[85] A. M. Roth, "The *psš-kf* and the 'Opening of the Mouth' Ceremony: A Ritual of Birth and Rebirth," *JEA* 78 (1992), 141–43. For the identification of Hathor with Nebet-Hetepet in the Middle Kingdom, see Kinney, *Dance*, 166.

[86] For the concept of embodiment, see the discussions in Galvin, "Priests," 215–18, and Kinney, *Dance*, 37–40, 167.

[87] See the summary of the arguments mounted by B. Bruyere, J. Bourriau, and L. Keimer in Pinch, *Votive*, 213–14.

[88] MMA tomb card 2366. At Dendera it is notable that a "union with the sun disc" took place during the three days that Hathor's festival of intoxication was celebrated. See F. Coppens, *The Wabet. Tradition and Innovation in Temples of the Ptolemaic and Roman Period* (Prague, 2007), 177.

[89] Galvin, "Priests," 100–101; Gillam "Priestesses," 216, 221; Troy, *Patterns*, 55, 60.

[90] D. C. Patch, "Girdles," in C. H. Roehrig, ed., *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh* (New York, 2005), 202, fig. 79.

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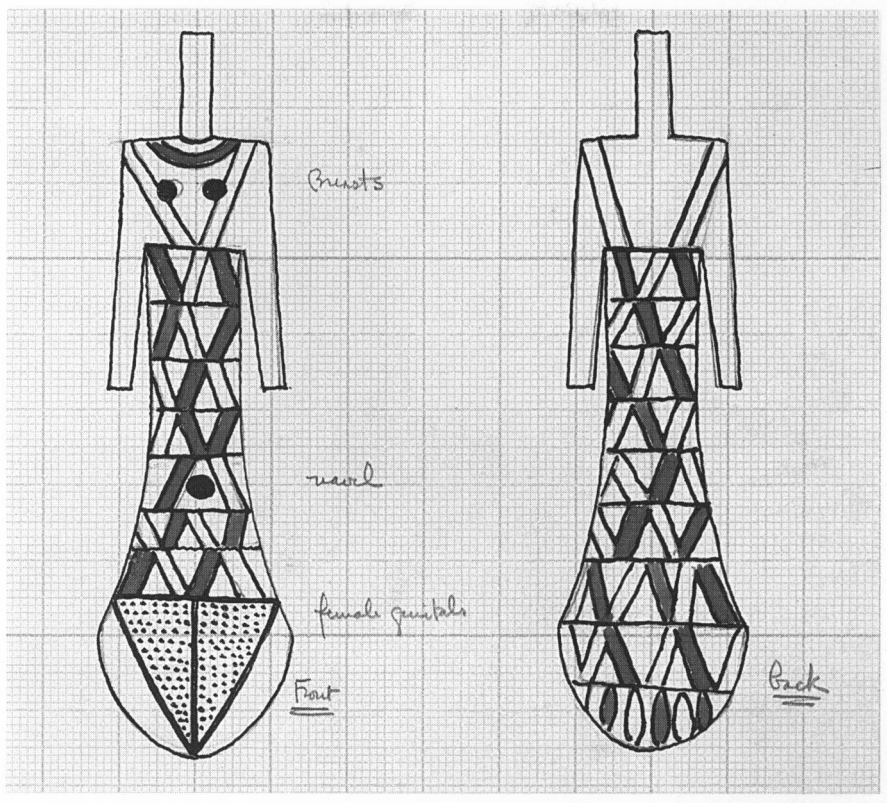

Fig. 6. A paddle doll in the act of anasyrmenê (Drawing of a paddle doll found in Asasif tomb 806 on MMA tomb card 2366). Photograph courtesy of the MMA.

serving as tangible commemorations of this contact with the divine. The paddle dolls may also have served an even more potent purpose however. As is much discussed, the First Intermediate Period led to a "democratization" of the afterlife in which mere mortals assumed rights to aspects of the afterlife formerly restricted to the king and his innermost circle of elites. The deceased who owned paddle dolls as part of his or her burial equipment was already an Osiris at death, as was the right of any righteous Egyptian by the Eleventh Dynasty. The paddle dolls, then, may well have celebrated or alluded to the deceased's new posthumous solar role. Once magically activated, the khener-performers embodied in the figurines may well have been able to raise their skirts for their owner and thereby revive him or her—as they had Re—from the stupor of death.

Fourth Line of Evidence: Costume

Elaborately patterned cloth, akin to that worn by the women the paddle dolls represent, is not easy to discover in Egyptian art. Cultic singers and dancers, like other Egyptians, tended to favor clean white linen for their dresses and short skirts. One notable exception to this, however, occurs in the tomb of Kenamun (TT 93). Although this tomb dates to the reign of Amenhotep II, roughly 250 years after the last of the paddle dolls, the parallels between the outfits worn by Kenamun's khener-women and those of the paddle dolls are so strong as to suggest either a continuing tradition or else a conscious archaizing in the costume of this particular musical troupe.

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Fig. 7. Kenamun's khener women (reproduction by Nina or Norman de Garis Davies. MMA 30.4.63. Rogers Fund, 1930). Photograph courtesy of the MMA.

The scene in question (fig. 7)[91] takes place in the midst of a general celebration occasioned by the dragging of several statues of Kenamun to various Theban temples and to his tomb. The procession included priests, worthies who pulled the statues on their sledges, and "all his female relations, combined into a chorus of women" who wailed at the head of the statues. Just as in the royal contexts discussed above, Kenamun's female relatives honored him in tandem with professional khener-troupes. These performers belonged to the various temples his statues were destined for and to his endowed mortuary estate (*pr-dt*).

The two khener-women attached to his own funerary estate led the others. They are depicted "rejoicing"—snapping their fingers and slapping their thighs—in tight, patterned skirts with crossed braces. The diamond shaped patterning on the skirts of these women is reminiscent of some of the designs on the dresses of the paddle dolls, but the two women who followed behind bore an even more strik-

[91] MMA 30.4.63; N. de G. Davies, *Ken-Amun*, 40–41, pl. 39. This similarity in costume has also been remarked on by Pinch, *Votive*, 212.

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ing resemblance to paddle dolls. These two, as their label clearly states, belonged to the "khener of Hathor" and are depicted in mid musical dance, stamping and snapping. Behind them were assembled two more groups, the khener of another goddess and a separate khener of Hathor. Both of these latter sets of khener-women wore long white dresses, shook their Hathor-headed sistra, and rattled their menats, as good votaries should. Given that there were apparently two very distinct Hathoric khener-troupes that participated in the festivities, it is extremely tempting to suggest that the more colorful contingent were delegates from Thutmose III's temple at Deir el-Bahari. In that sacred valley, the khener of the later temple may well have consciously and conservatively emulated the costume of their late Sixth and Eleventh Dynasty predecessors.

In terms of costume, the first and most blatant parallel between Kenamun's khener-women and the paddle dolls are the belts worn by each. The thin beaded top of the first belt is witnessed on some paddle dolls, whereas the second checkerboard pattern is exceedingly common.[92] Indeed, next to the pubic triangle and the wild hair, the checkerboard belt is almost a hallmark of the genre. Other parallels between the adornment of the two dancers and that of the paddle dolls are also readily apparent. These two Hathoric khener-women, for example, possessed the wide, banded collar typical of paddle dolls, and the arm bands worn by the dancers are similar to the bands depicted on those relatively rare paddle dolls whose arms were not reduced to simple stubs.[93]

The fabric that masked the midsections of the two women and their paddle doll compatriots was suspended by two cross-over bands that left breasts exposed. Although the backs of Kenamun's khener-women are hidden, their bands may well have continued behind as simple strings of beads, allowing the dancers' backs to be provocatively bared. This arrangement is often observed on the flipside of the paddle dolls.[94] Particularly interesting are the two patterns observable on the fabric that covered the abdomens of the khener-dancers, consisting of diamonds with central dots for the first dancer and vertical zig-zags for the second. Both are strongly reminiscent of the designs that typically decorated paddle doll dresses.[95]

Given the connections explored above that link paddle dolls to the genre of the truncated, Middle Kingdom female figurine, it is worth noting that the diamond with dots pattern is also found on a Middle Kingdom figurine excavated at Lisht (see fig. 8).[96] Enhancing the iconographic similarities between this Lisht figurine, the paddle dolls, and Kenamun's khener-women is the fact that its head was riddled with holes through which faux hair could be threaded to form a wig, perhaps one both brazen and beaded. Holes for hair and full dresses, although relatively rare in this genre of truncated female figurine, appear often enough to enhance our understanding of the type's origin and cultural meaning. Very similar figurines with patterned dresses and holes for the attachment of hair will be discussed in the following section in conjunction with figurines that belonged to a young girl named Hepy.

[92] For the thin "beaded" belt depicted on a paddle doll at Asasif, see MMA 31.3.39 (tomb 815-deaccessioned). For examples of the checkerboard belts found at Asasif, see MMA 31.3.35 (tomb 816), Cairo JE 56274 (tomb 816), MMA 31.3.43 (tomb 818), MMA 27.3.51 (tomb 104-deaccessioned), and MMA 27.3.52 (tomb 110).

[93] For paddle dolls from Asasif with similar necklaces, see, for example, MMA 31.3.38 (tomb 813—deaccessioned, now in Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas), MMA 15.10.90 (tomb 828), and MMA 31.3.39 (tomb 815-deaccessioned). For an armband depicted on a paddle doll from Asasif, see MMA 15.10.90 (tomb 828).

[94] Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 309–10. The cross-over bands, sometimes called "Libyan bands," are relatively common on depictions of acrobatic dancers and khener-women (Nord, "The Term *ḫnr*," 137; Kinney, Dance, 59, fig. 1.23; 60, fig. 1.30; 62, fig. 1.35). For some examples from Asasif, see MMA 31.3.35 (tomb 816), MMA 31.3.45 (tomb 839), MMA 15.10.88 (tomb 828-deaccessioned, now in Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas), MMA 27.3.51 (tomb 104-deacessioned), and MMA 27.3.54 (tomb 110-deaccessioned).

[95] The vertical herringbone pattern on some paddle dolls from Asasif [e.g., MMA 31.3.35 (tomb 816), Cairo JE 56274 (tomb 816), and MMA 31.3.43 (tomb 818)] is reminiscent of the zigzag pattern, and variations of the diamond pattern can be seen on other Asasif paddle dolls [e.g., MMA 31.3.38 (tomb 813-deacessioned, now in Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas) and the doll depicted on MMA tomb card 2366 (tomb 806)].

[96] Keimer, *Remarques*, pl. 14.2.

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Fig. 8. Diamond patterning on a paddle doll from Asasif 813 (MMA 31.3.38. Rogers Fund, 1931). Photograph courtesy of the MMA. Figurine excavated at Lisht (after Keimer, Remarques, pl. 14).

The striking similarity between the dress of the Hathoric khener-women in Kenamun's tomb and that worn by the paddle dolls reassures us that we are only seeing half of the story with respect to the latter. The dresses, as they continue down to the belt on the paddle dolls, are accurately portrayed, but then below the belt is bare. As the more demure depiction of the khener-women in Kenamun's tomb demonstrates, however, in actual fact the performers that the paddle dolls represented would normally have kept their pubic triangles covered. The revealing of the "secret" of the khener-women would presumably have been saved for the key moment in the ritual-dance that was most pregnant with cosmic potency. If so, it would have been the function of the paddle dolls to eternally preserve this moment together with its dramatic and transformative gesture of revelation.

Fifth Line of Evidence: Demographics

Because so many paddle dolls were bought from antiquities dealers, and because the Asasif excavations are as yet unpublished, it is a little known fact that some paddle dolls were discovered in discrete groups of five or more. Ten paddle dolls each were excavated in Asasif tombs 815 and 816. In the former, nine of the figurines were discovered in a single deposit, while in the latter six figurines were. Both sets of paddle dolls were individually deemed by the excavator to be so internally similar that they

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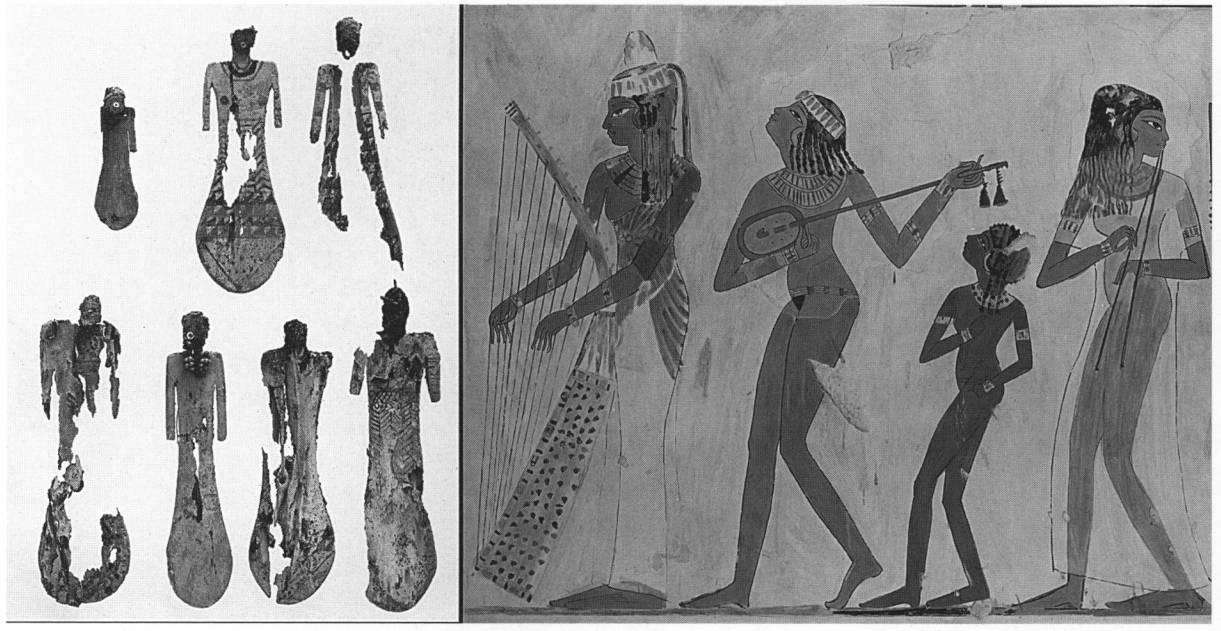

Fig. 9. Child doll among paddle dolls found in Asasif tomb 815; musicians from the tomb of Djeserkareseneb (reproduction by Charles K. Wilkinson. MMA 30.4.9. Rogers Fund, 1930). Photograph courtesy of the MMA.

were likely fashioned as sets by single artisans.[97] Further, of the twenty three paddle dolls discovered in a nearby tomb (Moller's tomb 35), five of the figurines were found in close association with one coffin and fifteen with another. In Asasif tombs with only a single coffin, some individuals possessed collectives of five (828), three (839), and two (111, 126, 801, 826) paddle dolls each. Asasif tombs 110, 806, 813, 818, and 822 also contained multiple paddle dolls, though the relationship between the burials and the figurines was not recorded. The iconographic similarity of many of these latter paddle dolls, however, strongly suggests that they did not belong to multiple burials, but rather were from the start envisioned as a group or, perhaps more accurately, as a troupe.

The conception of these larger groupings of paddle dolls as troupes stems from the similarity of their composition to that of many known cadres of musical performers. Certainly, three of these groups of multiple paddle dolls (from tombs 816, 815, and 828) included among their number one doll that was notably smaller than the others, unpainted, and which almost assuredly represented a young girl (see fig. 9).[98] The presence of such a "girl" doll among the larger paddle dolls mirrors the composition of numerous two dimensional depictions of dancing troupes. Such representations typically include women playing instruments (especially clappers, harps, tamborines, and lutes), sexually mature dancers, and then one or two little girls who danced alongside the older performers. Such girls were quite likely the "trainees" (*nfrwt*) of the khener, a class of junior performer amply represented in Old Kingdom titles.[99] The most acrobatic of khener-dancers no doubt did begin their training at a

[97] MMA tomb card 2561. The five paddle dolls in question are MMA 31.3.35, Cairo JE 56274, Cairo 56275, MMA 31.3.36, MMA 31.3.37.

[98] Two out of the four paddle dolls interred in Asasif tomb 110 (MMA 27.3.54 and MMA 27.3.55, both deacessioned) may represent girls as well, given that they are much smaller than the other two figurines. Unlike the child paddle dolls in 815, 816, and 828, however, these diminutive paddle dolls are painted. It is thus perhaps more likely that the size differential between the sets was due to their having been fashioned by different artisans.

[99] Kinney, *Dance*, 27, 29, 34–35.

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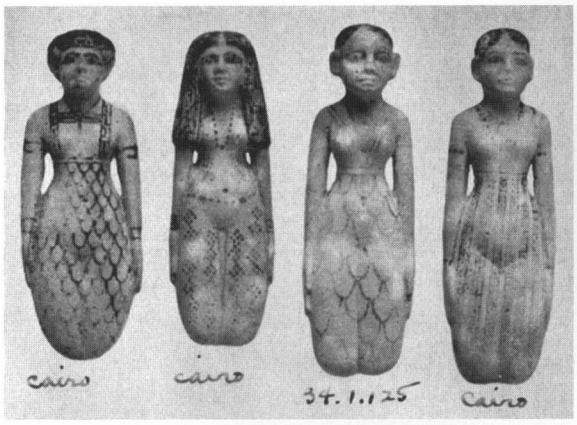

Fig. 10. Four figurines found with Hepy (after Lansing, "Egyptian Expedition," 34-35, Fig. 29).

young age, for the type of backflips performed by Wah-ka's dancers are best begun when the body is at its most pliable and inhibitions are underdeveloped. The integration of young girls into troupes, in addition to assuring a steady supply of talented older dancers, may well have added extra visual interest to performances.

The provision of a girl paddle doll among mature counterparts also adds strength to the above mounted argument that the paddle dolls were modelled on the real cultic performers who once staffed Nebhepetre's mortuary complex. Myt, the king's presumed priestess-wife (or perhaps priestess-daughter), who was between 3 and 5 years old at death, is relatively well known for the disjuncture between her probable priestly responsibilities and her tender age. Also buried in the temple precinct proper, however, was another young girl, who, like many of her older colleagues, was evidently richly equipped at the time of burial and no doubt also served in the cult of the king and of his chosen goddess, Hathor.[100] While some individuals at Asasif, familiar with the temple's performances, then, contented themselves with provisioning their own or their loved one's burials with a single dancer to resurrect the soul, others hedged their bets and equipped the dead with an entire dancing troupe, neophytes and all.

So far, parallels between paddle dolls and the genre of Middle Kingdom, truncated female figurines have been noted where present. It is thus pertinent to briefly mention the burial equipment of a young girl named Hepy buried at Lisht in the reign of Senwosret I.[101] Hepy's burial is anomalous because of the wealth and care expended on the internment of a person of her age and sex, as both would normally have placed her at the bottom rungs of the social ladder or earned her the merest of subsidiary burials in the tomb of a rich father. Like the two young girls provided with their own graves in Nebhepetre's complex, however, Hepy merited her own burial chamber. She also wore a cowrie-shell girdle to the grave in an analogous fashion to some of the women buried in Nebhepetre's burial monument as well as around the complexes of later Middle Kingdom kings at Lisht and Dahshur, as will be discussed below.

Directly outside the wall that blocked the entrance to Hepy's burial chamber, someone arranged four truncated, faience female figurines (see fig. 10). Of these four figurines, three possessed holes for the attachment of fake hair and also wore dresses similar to those worn by the paddle dolls. Each of the dresses extended up to an area just below the breasts and were held up by straps. Indeed, while the dresses of the first and third figurines closely parallel those typically worn by contemporary models of female offering bearers, the dress of the figurine on the far right is virtually identical to that discovered on two of the paddle dolls from Asasif tomb 110 (MMA 27.3.52 and MMA 27.3.53-deacessioned). The remaining figurine was distinguished from the other three in a number of ways. For example, instead of having holes for the attachment of hair, she possessed a long hairdo modelled in faience. In addition, she was slightly smaller than the rest and depicted completely nude, apart from her jewelry. Like

[100] For the young girl buried in tomb 5, see Naville, *Deir el-Bahari I*, 46–47.

[101] Hepy's tomb is published in A. Lansing, "The Egyptian Expedition 1933–1934: Excavations at Lisht," *MMA Bulletin* 29, no. 11.2 (1934), 28–40.

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Hepy, whose mummy was well preserved, this figurine was ornamented with a girdle, a long necklace, and bracelets, although due to her truncated state, it was impossible to tell whether the human model for this figurine once wore anklets, as Hepy did. Adorning the faience girl's torso and thighs were the diamond-shaped tattoos known from paddle dolls and Nebhepetre's performers alike.

Hepy's four figurines, then, like the groups of paddle dolls at Asasif, almost certainly represent a khener-troupe. Indeed, given the size of the smallest figurine and the presence of her girdle, she may well have represented Hepy herself, whose particularly honored burial would then have been due to her occupation as the youngest performer in a khener-troupe.[102] If this were true, the inclusion of a self referential figurine among Hepy's burial goods is perhaps paralleled elsewhere. At Hawara, the site of the mortuary temple of Amenemhet III, a truncated figurine that came complete with a mud bead wig was discovered among the grave goods of a young girl named Sitrenenutet, buried in tomb 58. While this figurine has been interpreted as a toy, it may be more fitting—on parallel with Hepy—to suggest that the figurine served as an identity marker for her young owner, who may have performed as part of a khener-troupe in the local mortuary temple.[103] Other nude female figurines, especially those depicted wearing the sidelock of youth, are also candidates for child dancers. The assemblage in Lisht North tomb 319 of a side-locked figurine (MMA 15.3.41-deacessioned), a headless figurine of a similar type, and beads from a girdle represents yet another possible parallel to Hepy's girdle and group of figurines. A sidelocked, tattooed, and begirdled figurine (MMA 22.1.180), excavated at Lisht and interred together in a grave with ivory clappers, will come into consideration below.[104]

Given the strong association of truncated Middle Kingdom figurines with girdles, it is worth noting that with one exception—that of a burial adjacent to the entrance to the causeway of Nebhepetre's mortuary temple—the only girdles that were discovered in the general vicinity of Asasif ornamented the priestesses and other women buried within the temple complex.[105] This distribution, of course, reminds one of the elaborate girdles discovered among the treasures of the royal daughters whose burials surrounded the Middle Kingdom pyramids at Lisht and Dahshur. These princesses seem deliberately to have assumed Hathoric imagery in efforts to revivify their fathers or husbands, and the girdles may even have been worn specifically in reference to the role they played in this cultic ritual.[106] While the textiles painted on the paddle dolls at Asasif would have shielded most girdles from sight, this type of jewelry can be observed occasionally on the backs of the figurines.[107] Further, it is worth noting that girdles are also evidenced on a number of unprovenienced paddle dolls.[108] As the Deir el-Bahari depiction of Neferure and her princess companion demonstrates, these cultic badges of honor

[102] The set of ivory dancing dwarves discovered alongside the female figurines is also of interest given the scene in the Late Old Kingdom tomb of *Nw-nṯr* at Giza that depicts dancers wearing cross-over bands, brandishing clappers, and performing together with a small dancing dwarf (Lansing, "Egyptian Expedition," 30–37, figs. 29–33; Kinney, *Dance*, 12, fig. 1.9). A faience figure of Taweret also accompanied the figurines of the girls and the dwarves.

[103] W. M. F. Petrie et al., *The Labyrinth Gerzeh and Mazghuneh* (London, 1912), 36, pl. 30.

[104] See also the begirdled, sidelocked female figurine MMA 15.3.41 (deacessioned), which was found together with another truncated nude female figurine in tomb 317 at Lisht North.

[105] Girdles or traces of girdles were discovered on the bodies of the Sole Royal Ornaments and Priestesses of Hathor Henhenit (tomb 11) and Ashait (tomb 17) as well as in tomb 23, which belonged to one of the tattooed dancers discussed previously (MMA tomb cards 29, 53, 91).

[106] H. Winlock, *The Treasure of El Lahun* (New York, 1934), 37–43, pls. 8 and 9. For a discussion of the Hathoric iconography commonly adopted by Middle Kingdom princesses, see Gillam, "Priestesses," 217.

[107] This is noted with respect to a paddle doll (MMA 31.3.39-deaccessioned) found in Asasif 815 (tomb card 2520) and others (MMA 31.3.35; JE 56274) discovered in Asasif 816 (tomb card 2559–2560). Given that the backs of paddle dolls are rarely published, and many from Asasif could not be consulted, girdles may appear much more frequently than is generally thought.

[108] For example, see Brooklyn Museum 37.105 and 37.102; British Museum 6459; Berlin Museum 6907. Among the rare examples of provenienced paddle dolls with girdles observable from the front, see the two excavated in Dra' Abu el-Naga, shaft tomb K02.1 (Rummel, *Meeting*, 35).

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were still prevalent in some analogous New Kingdom contexts, although by the Eighteenth Dynasty the process of diffusion ensured that even well adorned servant girls might be so girdled.

Sixth Line of Evidence: Music

Taking the archaeological context of paddle dolls into account reveals that these figurines were often discovered in groups that to some extent mirrored the composition of real troupes of musicians and dancers. A consideration of the other items discovered with paddle dolls further supports this equation. Take, for example Asasif tomb 815. In tomb 815, which does not appear to have contained multiple burials, there were found a number of grave goods typical of the late Eleventh Dynasty.[109] These included, for instance, a boat model, a hemispherical red bowl, faience jewelry consisting of ball beads and beads from collars,[110] arrow tips and a leather apron, clay columns from an offering tray, a headrest, and writing material. Many of these artifacts were commonly found in tombs with paddle dolls, but they were just as frequently found in tombs without. What was particularly interesting, however, was the contents of two toilet boxes that were found in association with one of the paddle dolls—the other nine, including the child paddle doll, were cached elsewhere in the tomb. Discovered in conjunction with the toilet boxes (or inside them, perhaps, the notes are unclear) were the paddle doll (MMA 31.3.39-deaccessioned), various miscellaneous toilet items, a wooden mirror handle, two plaits of false hair, two magic knives, and a pair of ivory clappers (MMA 31.3.34-deacessioned) fashioned in the shape of human hands and forearms. A leather hanging (MMA 31.3.98) also found in the tomb depicted a female harpist performing under a canopy of grapevines, while a short, nude figure danced before her, his large phallus angled oddly so as to point in her general direction. This painting, while it postdates the paddle dolls and should be associated with the votives to Hathor donated in Hatshepsut's temple, is nonetheless interesting given the strong association between khener-women and harps, discussed below.[111]

The false hair is intriguing precisely because of its potential symbolic affiliation with the paddle dolls' own wild locks, and the connections between paddle dolls, mirrors and magic knives will be discussed below. Of interest here, however, is the relationship of paddle dolls to clappers. Clappers, carved from hippopotamus ivory, most often in the form of human hands and forearms, occur in two or possibly three of the tombs at Asasif that possessed paddle dolls (815, 819, and 839) and only one of the tombs that did not (812). The correlation between the paddle dolls and the clappers is heightened, however, when one takes into account evidence from the greater environs of Nebhepetre's monument, such as tomb 1112, which was constructed close to Amenemhet's aborted Theban mortuary temple. The famous Ramesseum grave, often thought to have belonged to a magician, included a clapper, magic knives, a paddle doll, and nude, truncated female figurines in its quite remarkable assemblage.[112] Also of interest, however, was the debris found in a redeposition of contemporary coffins (termed 6A East

[109] MMA tomb cards 2526 and 2519; Winlock, *Excavations*, 207–8.

[110] One of the paddle dolls wore a miniature necklace of faience ball beads (MMA tomb card 2527), and instances of paddle dolls wearing miniature versions of the jewelry found on the tomb owners is also evidenced in tomb 816, where some of the paddle dolls wore straw necklaces similar to those found in association with the women interred within (MMA tomb card 2560-2561).

[111] MMA tomb cards 2531–2532. C. H. Roehrig, "Hanging (?)," in C. H. Roehrig, ed., *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh*, (New York, 2005), 46.

[112] Magic knives were discovered with paddle dolls in Asasif tomb 839 (MMA 31.3.31) and possibly 819 (MMA 31.3.33) as well—the unworked hippo tusk in 819 may have been intended to be utilized as a clapper, a magic knife, or both. The association between knives and truncated female figurines at Lisht, however, is remarkable. Tombs that contained both types of artifacts are Lisht 460, 475, 877, 884, 885, and 907. Tomb E5 at El Arabah, also contained a truncated female figurine and an ivory knife, Garstang, *El Arabah: A Cemetery of the Middle Kingdom* (London, 1902), 10, 13, pl. 14, 17.

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of Pabasa), which included a harp (MMA 19.3.17) and the handle of a mirror in addition to a paddle doll (MMA 19.3.13-deaccessioned) and clapper (MMA 19.3.15).

It is important to note that not only are clappers closely associated with the paddle dolls of Asasif, they have also been discovered together with the truncated, nude and often tattooed female figurines at Asasif (tomb 518), at Lisht (tombs 555, 752, 884, 885), and elsewhere (Kubban, cemetery 110, tomb 46).[113] In the burial at Kubban, the figurine, decorated with crosses around her waist, was found also with a mirror in addition to a hand-shaped ivory clapper. As will be discussed in the following section, the inclusion of a clapper and a mirror in grave goods provided the dead—or the figurine—with the tools necessary to perform the cosmologically charged mirror dance. The combination of a clapper and a truncated female figurine was also witnessed in Lisht tomb 885, where the figurine was depicted with a sidelock of youth. Other potentially significant objects from this tomb included magic knives, a figurine of a monkey and a harp, and statuettes of two dwarves. So here again, similar patterning is apparent between paddle dolls and the Middle Kingdom truncated figurines. It should perhaps be noted that a skull of a young girl was discovered in Lisht tomb 555 along with three clappers, ivory knives, a braid of hair, and four other skulls. It is tempting to suggest, then, that this girl, like Hepy and Sitrenenutet perhaps, may have performed as a novice in a khener-troupe prior to her untimely death.[114]

This correlation between clappers, paddle dolls, and their truncated descendants is of particular interest for the thesis of this essay because clappers were among the most typical instruments of khener-troupes. Indeed, clappers are so frequently attested in this context that Betsy Bryan has cogently argued that the etymology of khener came not from the verb "to confine" but rather from *ḫni* "to keep rhythm." Further, she argues that the U31 hieroglyph that determines the word should be reinterpreted as a pair of curved sticks.[115] A scene of a female dance instructor depicted reaching into a chest containing clappers, a broad collar of the type known from paddle dolls, and a menat necklace is one indication that clappers constituted a vital component of a khener-woman's kit.[116] Copious other written and iconographic evidence, however, can be marshalled to demonstrate that clappers were particularly associated with khener-troupes of Hathor and with the goddess herself.

The vast majority of the clappers discovered both at Asasif and at Lisht were fashioned in the shape of human hands. This is especially significant given that one important aspect of Hathor's persona was that of the "hand" of Atum, i.e., the female collaborator in the sun-god's original masturbatory creation of life. The Hathor heads sometimes found at the upper end of later arm clappers render explicit this mythic connection between the goddess, the personified hand of the sun-god, and the clapper.[117] In the Middle Kingdom tomb of Senbi at Meir the connection between Hathor and her clappers is celebrated by a harpist who sings: "Exalted is Hathor, (the lady) of love, O castanet-players, O castanet-players!" The castanet-players, who wear menat-necklaces, perform in the company of young women who offer sistra and menat-necklaces to Senbi and express their wishes that Hathor favor him. For their part, the castanet-players sing to the goddess, "O Golden One in the meadows, Golden One in the meadows, the places—the places of her will—may you be gracious, may you be gracious, O

[113] C. M. Firth, *The Archaeological Survey of Nubia, 1910–1911* (Cairo, 1927), 59, pl. 27, doll 2.

[114] A scene in a Dyn. 5 tomb at el Hammamiya depicts a great slew of nude female dancers brandishing clappers with one or both hands and occasionally also slapping their buttocks for rhythm (A. El-Khouli and N. Kanawati, *The Old Kingdom Tombs of El- Hammamiya*, [Sydney, 1990], pl. 67). Their dance may perhaps resemble that performed by the women the truncated Middle Kingdom figurines depicted.

[115] Bryan, "Etymology," 47–48; 52–53.

[116] Bryan, "Etymology," 49. The scene comes from the tomb of Khafkhufu (W. K. Simpson, *Giza Mastabas III: The Mastabas of Kawab, Khafkhufu I and II* [Boston, 1978], fig. 48).

[117] D. C. Patch, "Clapper," in Roehrig, ed., *Hatshepsut*, 175; C. Ziegler, "Fragment of a clapper adorned with a Hathor head and a hand," in E. Brovarski et al., eds., *Egypt's Golden Age: The Art of Living in the New Kingdom 1558–1085 B.C.* (Boston, 1982), 262.

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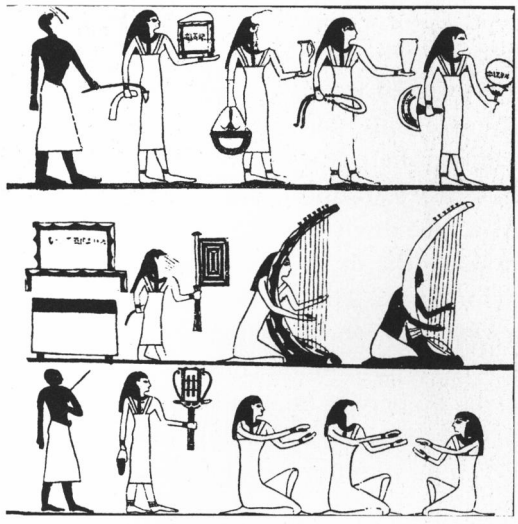

Fig. 11. Harpists perform as khener-musicians in the tomb of Amenemhat (tomb 2) at Beni Hasan (after Newberry, Beni Hasan I, pl. 7).

Golden One!"[118] No doubt it was precisely this intimate association between the clapper and the goddess that prompted the dedication of hand-shaped clappers to the later Hathor temple at Gebel Zeit.[119]

The partial fusion of the clappers with Hathor and the feminized solar hand may also have bestowed upon the instruments a particular association with the creation of new life. As P. Westcar (9.27–11.4) suggests, music from a Hathoric khener-troupe may have accompanied the birth of kings—at least in legend. Thus, the sound of clappers may by association also have been thought to aid in royal rebirth.[120] Such an explanation would not only account for the clappers interred in the tomb of Tutankhamun, but it would also explain the prevalence of clappers at Heb Sed festivals. Women with clappers performed at the Heb Seds of Amenhotep III, together with his sistra-shaking daughters, and also at later iterations of this rite in the reign of Osorkon.[121]

The other instrument associated specifically with the Hathor cult, Hathoric dances, and with the paddle doll population was the harp. Three harps (real and model) were found at Asasif, and, although the numbers are small, all three were discovered in tombs that also possessed paddle dolls (813, 822, 828). As discussed briefly above, a harp (MMA 19.3.17) was also found together with a paddle doll and a pair of clappers in the debris labelled 6A East of Pabasa at Asasif. This harp and clapper set, if the two in fact belonged to the same individual, could well have served as the equipment for a khener-performance, for the revealing high-kick dance was performed solely to the accompaniment of clappers and harps.[122]

Hathor seems to have had nearly as great an affinity for the harp as she did for the clapper, for the goddess is praised "with delightful songs, for . . . the mistress of jubilation, the mistress of music, the queen of harp-playing, the lady of the dance."[123] Harpists are often depicted singing in honor of the goddess Hathor, as in the tomb of Senbi. Sometimes these harpists are labeled as members of a khener-troupe, while other times they are specifically designated as the daughters of the deceased. Without a label it is impossible to tell to which of the two categories they belong, and this ambiguity serves as yet another example of the interchangeable nature of the two roles.[124] In a scene from the tomb of Amenemhat at Beni Hasan (see fig. 11) harpists perform as khener-musicians, while other women bring clappers, mirrors, and menat necklaces to place in the grave—just the type of gifts that will be the focus of the following two sections.[125] This assemblage calls to mind the scene of harpists playing for nude mirror dancers in the late Sixth Dynasty tomb of Unas-ankh, a tomb already familiar as the earliest in which a paddle doll has yet been found.

[118] Kitchen, *Poetry*, 135; Blackman, *Meir I*, 23–24, pl. 2.

[119] Pinch, *Votive*, 222.

[120] Roth, "Birth and Rebirth," 140–44.

[121] Wente, "Hathor," 84 and the references cited therein.

[122] Kinney, *Dance*, 162.

[123] Bleeker, *Hathor*, 54.

[124] See for example the tomb chapel of Pepi-ankh at Meir, where the harpists are specifically designated as the tomb owner's daughters (A. Blackman, *Meir IV*, 31, pl. 9). For the connection between harpists and Hathor, see H. Buchberger "Sexualität und Harfenspiel – Notizen zur "sexuellen" Konnotation der altägyptischen Ikonographie" *GM* 66 (1983), 11–43.

[125] Lilyquist *Mirrors*, fig. 131; P. E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan I*, 31, pl. 7.

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Fig. 12. Bowl depicting a festive procession, Persian Period, c. 525–500 BC. Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

Whether harpists had the same risqué reputation in the Middle Kingdom as they apparently did in later periods, when they are routinely depicted strumming a hand-held harp while nonchalantly straddling an oversized phallus, is not known. The double entendre between *bnt* "harp" and *bn* or *bnbn*, meaning "to copulate," however, was likely operative already in the Middle Kingdom.[126] Considering the deep traditionalism often inherent in Egyptian religious festivals, it is worth mentioning a Persian Period stone bowl that depicts a procession of women moving towards a Hathor temple (see fig. 12). First in line after the sacrificial animals is a musician playing a handheld drum, an instrument first noted in New Kingdom contexts. Behind her, however, came a particularly interesting threesome: a woman playing a hand-held harp, another banging clappers, and a third lifting her skirts in an act of anasyrmenê.

Seventh Line of Evidence: Mirrors

The intimate association between mirrors and the goddess Hathor was made famously explicit in the form of the Hathor-headed mirrors owned by Sithathor Yunet and Mereret, two Middle Kingdom princesses also well-known for their exquisite girdles.[127] The earliest Hathor-shaped mirror handle, however, was owned by Amunet, the tattooed "sole royal ornament [and] priestess of Hathor" buried in Nebhepetre's mortuary monument. The body of Aashait (tomb 17)—one of Nebhepetre's wives, who otherwise bore the same titles as Amunet—had been robbed in antiquity. Impressions on her wrappings, however, revealed the original presence of a copper mirror and also of a girdle. Given that both Amunet and Aashait were "sole royal ornaments" as well as "priestesses of Hathor," the mirrors were perhaps included among their wrappings as tools of their trade or badges of their office. As mentioned briefly above, the title "sole royal ornament" (*ḫkrt wʿtt nswt*) was occasionally written with a cased mirror for a determinative. Alternatively, and just as interestingly, the title could be written with a determinative that indicated the movement of limbs in dancing.[128]

If paddle dolls were indeed modelled after the category of women interred in Nebhepetre's mortuary temple, one would expect the high correlation between mirrors and paddle dolls that is in fact attested. Only eight percent of the tombs at Asasif were equipped with mirrors or model mirrors, yet of the ten recovered examples, eight came from tombs that also possessed paddle dolls (604, 815, 816, 817, 822, 828, 839). Likewise, in Beni Hasan tomb 511, archaeologists discovered a paddle doll interred together with two mirrors and only a single coffin.[129]

[126] Hathor, see Buchberger "Sexualität und Harfenspiel," 16.

[127] Winlock, *Treasure*, 60–62, pls. 14 and 15.

[128] See Fischer, *Dendera*, 136, n. 591; Troy, *Patterns*, 78. For Amunet's mirror, see Winlock, *Treasure*, 62. For Ashait's mirror, see MMA tomb card 43.

[129] Garstang, *Burial Customs*, 227.

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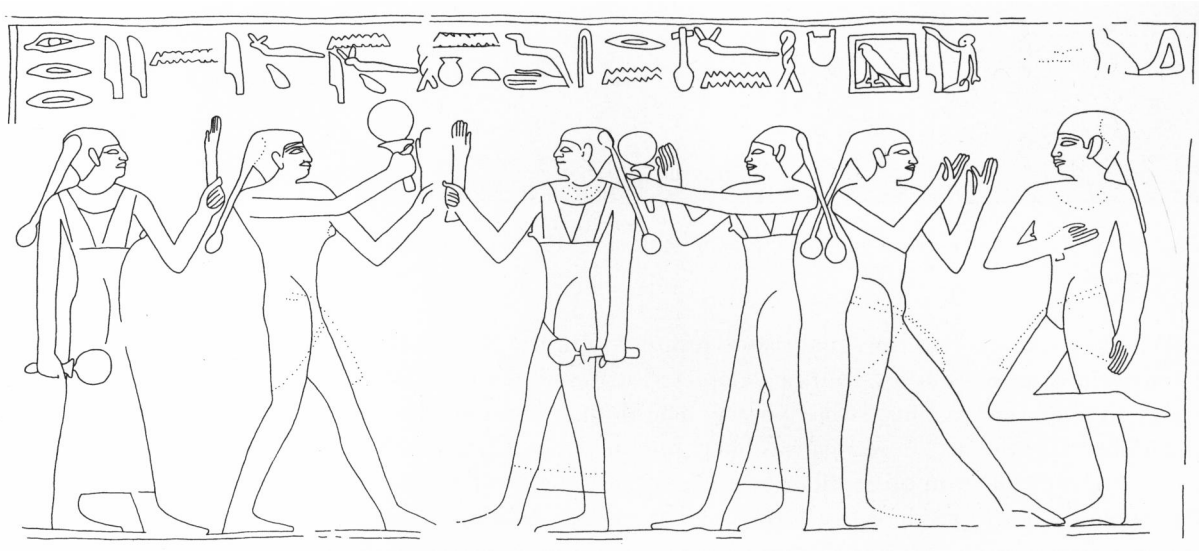

Fig. 13. Mirror dance in Mereruka (after Lilyquist, Mirrors, Fig. 106).

As Christine Lilyquist has demonstrated, mirrors were characteristic accoutrements of priestesses of Hathor, who often possessed mirrors inscribed with their name and cultic title. Although we possess no definite evidence, Nebhepetre's priestesses and their paddle doll counterparts may well have utilized the mirrors as props in the cultic performance of the mirror dance.[130] The mirror dance is depicted adjacent to a hymn to Hathor in the tomb of Mereruka (see fig. 13) and is otherwise only attested in the tomb of Unis-ankh (see fig. 14). The dance, which showcased a number of nude performers, was undoubtedly erotic, yet it also possessed a strong solar symbolism. Certainly, at a key point in the dance, some of the performers held up mirrors to reflect either a hand shaped clapper or the dancer's own hand. Given the conjunction of the hand and the disc—the latter perhaps blazing with the reflected splendor of the sun, the dance almost certainly referenced or re-enacted the union between the solar disc and his Hathoric hand.[131] This tradition may have survived for millennia given that in the Greco-Roman temple of Hathor at Dendera scenes in which mirrors are offered occur only on the walls of chapels that were key to the ritual of the *ḥnm-itn*, the "union with the sun's disc."[132]

Potential kits of mirrors and clappers have been discovered together in tomb 815, tomb 839, and in the redeposition of funerary goods dubbed 6A East of Pabasa in Asasif. An ivory hand clapper and a bronze mirror were also discovered with the truncated female figurine in Kubban tomb 46 from cemetery 110, discussed above. The relative lack of depictions of mirror dances and the rarity of other discrete finds of mirrors, clappers, and truncated figurines in graves after the early Middle Kingdom, however, may suggest that the dance declined in popularity over the course of the Twelfth Dynasty or became increasingly restricted as cultic property to the royal women that surrounded the king at death.

[130] Lilyquist, *Mirrors*, 97, notes that the performers of the Hathoric mirror dance are often notably young women, which is interesting given the line of evidence relating to demographics.

[131] H. Hickmann, "La danse aux miroirs," *BIE* 37 (1956), 151–90.

[132] Coppens, *Wabet*, 110.

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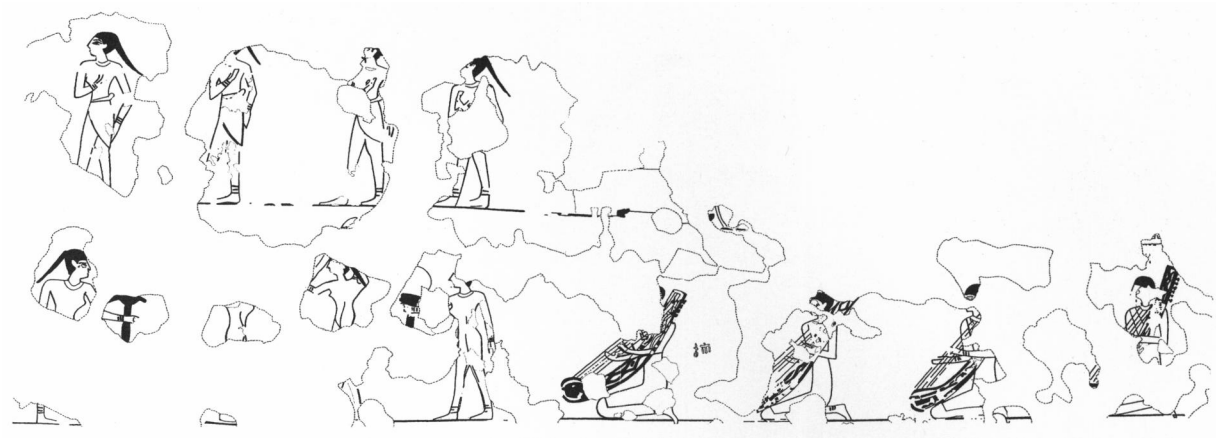

Fig. 14. Tomb of Unis-ankh mirror dance (after Saleh, Three Old Kingdom, pl. 3).

Eighth Line of Evidence: Menat Necklaces

Priestesses of Hathor honored the goddess by shaking sistra and by rattling menat necklaces. The menat necklace, which consisted of a robust collar of beads and a counterpoise that was broad at the top and tapered to a slight bulb at the bottom, first appears in Egyptian art towards the end of the Old Kingdom, when it was worn by two priestesses of Hathor. In tandem with the sistrum, the menat necklace quickly became the cultic symbol of choice for Egyptian priestesses of Hathor, as well as for the cultic performers of the goddess. Hathor bore the epithet "Lady of the Menat,"[133] and it would appear that as a fetish of the goddess, the menat could bring those who handled it in direct contact with the divine and impart to them the blessings of the goddess.[134] Hathor's priestesses also served as potential vessels of the goddess, capable of embodying her and channelling her power. Thus, they too could be termed "menats."[135]

It was argued above that the lack of legs on the representation of a dancer could be readily explained by the desire to emphasize the vulva, if the focus of the dance was in fact the flash of this cosmically charged body part. There is, however, another related argument. By emphasizing the vulva at the expense of the legs, the paddle dolls resembled personified menat necklaces.[136] Certainly the wild hair of the paddle dolls has often been remarked upon, and some scholars have suggested that it was meant to be shaken to produce a sound.[137] While it seems probable that the strings of mud and turquoise beads that most often made up the hair of the paddle dolls would not have withstood vigorous shaking, the resemblance between the beaded cluster that made up the necklace and the mass of beaded hair that surmounted the paddle doll is clear (see fig. 15).[138]

The similarities in structure between the shape of the menat necklace and the paddle doll's body are also evocative. Certainly, the angular shoulders of the paddle dolls and the fact that their arms were

[133] P. Barguet, "L'origine de la signification du contrepoids de collier-menat," *BIFAO* 52 (1953), 106.
[134] Blackman, *Meir I*, 25; Kinney, *Dance*, 37.
[135] Kinney, *Dance*, 39–40.
[136] Barguet, "Collier-menat," 103–4.
[137] Saleh and Sourouzian, *Official Catalogue*, no. 81.
[138] A. K. Capel et al., eds., *Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven: Women in Ancient Egypt* (New York, 1997), 100.

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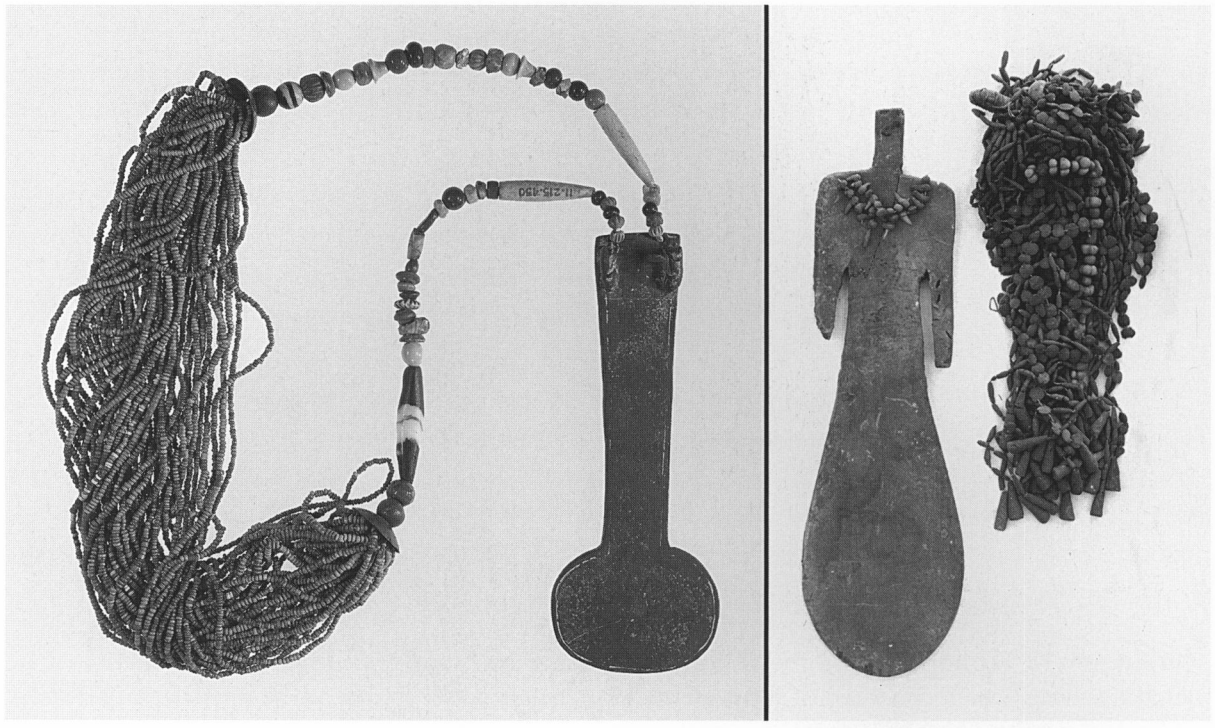

Fig. 15. Menat necklace (MMA 11.215.450. Rogers Fund, 1911) and a paddle doll excavated in Asasif tomb 828 (MMA 15.10.91; purchased from the Rogers Fund, 1915, now deaccessioned). Photograph courtesy of the MMA.

most often reduced to vestigial stumps combine to provide them with a shape reminiscent of the tops of the counterpoises. This effect is heightened by the tapering of the body and by the ample rounded curves of its bottom end. The base of the menat necklace has often been discussed as a womb, and this metaphor can be rendered explicit in the iconography shown within the more elaborate examples, having to do with the birthing of Horus in the marshes or related themes.[139] With the paddle dolls, of course, all subtlety is abandoned and the presence of the vulva at the bulb of the base makes it unequivocal that this lower region is to be interpreted as a womb. The Taweret figures found protecting this vulnerable region on some of the provenienced and unprovenienced paddle dolls only enhance the equation.

The similarity in shape between the paddle dolls and the menat necklaces is particularly noticeable when one compares the shape of the dolls with that of the great many model menat-necklace counterpoises that were left as votives to Hathor at Deir el-Bahari in the New Kingdom (see fig. 16). As is well known, the allure of capitalizing on the power and popularity of Hathor was also attractive to Hatshepsut, who built a mortuary temple that echoed Nebhepetre's and was nestled right beside it. At this temple vast quantities of votives were dedicated to the goddess throughout the New Kingdom. Among the most numerous were bare wooden menat-necklace counterpoises that resemble highly schematized versions of those paddle dolls whose heads and hair are now missing.

In addition to their basic function as a material fetish of the goddess, menat-necklaces appear to have been particularly associated with rituals that centered on the king, such as the suckling of the

[139] Tooley, "Middle Kingdom," 309.

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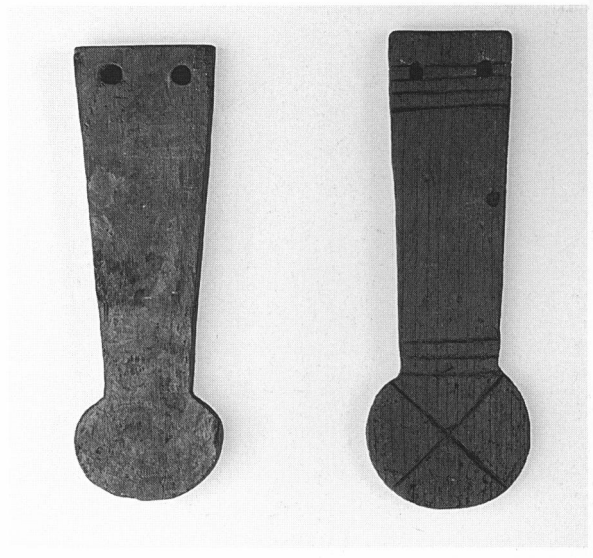

Fig. 16. Two of the many model menat necklace-counterpoises from Deir el-Bahari (MMA 23.3.85 and 23.3.86. Rogers Fund, 1923). Photograph courtesy of the MMA.

royal heir, coronation ceremonies, and the Sed-festival.[140] In the Story of Sinuhe, the royal princesses beseech the king on Sinuhe's behalf, pleading, "May your arms (receive) the beauteous (menat), oh enduring King, the ornaments of the Mistress of Heaven, that the Golden One may give life into your nostril."[141] These royal associations, of course, are particularly appropriate for rites that would have taken place within a mortuary temple. While the tradition of offering votives was highly developed in the mid Eighteenth Dynasty, it is barely attested in the Eleventh. Perhaps, then, instead of materializations of Hathoric ceremonies being deposited inside a temple as votive offerings, analogous items were distributed to or purchased by those who attended or took part in such ceremonies at Deir el-Bahari in the Middle Kingdom. Most witnesses would, of course, be Thebans but some who attended rites or festivals in the course of a visit to the royal court would return to their hometowns bearing the sacred souvenirs of their visits. This scenario may well account for why so few paddle dolls have been discovered outside Thebes and why so few truncated female figurines come from cemeteries not defined by the presence of a contemporaneous royal mortuary temple.

Conclusion

Paddle dolls closely resemble the women who originally staffed the strongly Hathoric cult of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II. In certain instances, they bore the same tattoos as some of the women interred on temple grounds—diamond-shaped patterns known to be associated with cultic dancing from the iconography in the tomb of Wah-ka II at Qau. Further, just as Nebhepetre's cultic staff included both women and young girls, single sets of paddle dolls could be comprised of a cohort of regularly sized figurines and a single miniature figurine. Like Nebhepetre's Hathoric functionaries, paddle dolls were found mostly in close association with his mortuary temple. Their elaborately patterned costume is extremely unusual, and it is therefore fascinating that a very close sartorial parallel was found in the dresses worn by the women of a khener-troupe of Hathor that belonged to one specific unnamed Theban temple in the tomb of Kenamun. Given the remarkable resemblance between the paddle dolls and Kenamun's khener-women, it is not at all improbable that the latter hailed from the Hathor temple at Deir el-Bahari.

A clue as to the nature of the paddle dolls' imagined performance is provided by their very prominent public triangles, the exaggerated nature of which suggests that at a crucial moment in the dance the performers lifted their skirts to revive the dead king or the dead person in whose tomb they were interred. The dead soul would thus be identified with Re and they with

[140] Bleeker, *Hathor*, 59.
[141] Galvin, "Priests," 207.

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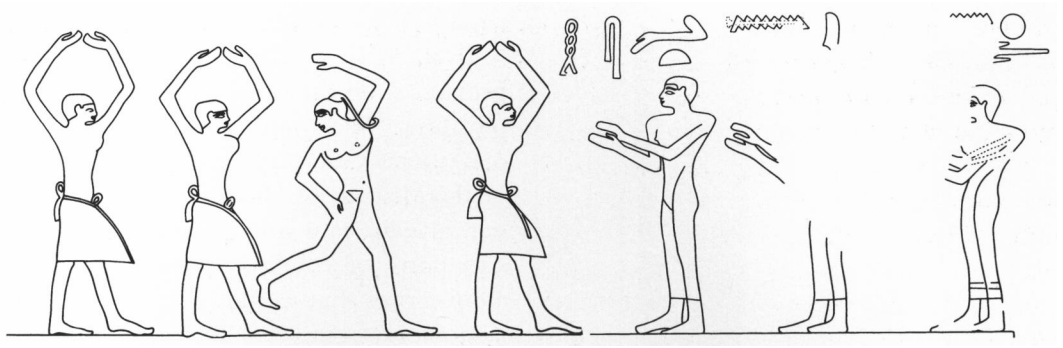

Fig. 17. Nude dancer in an Old Kingdom khener-troupe (after Kanawati, Kaiemankh, pl. 35).

Hathor. Certainly, the instruments and accoutrements buried in statistically significant numbers with the paddle dolls are precisely those shown with the khener performers sacred to the goddess: clappers, harps, and mirrors. Sistra, interestingly, are never found, though they do not occur in Middle Kingdom graves generally, being perhaps too sacred. Menats, the other main insignia of devotees of Hathor are also virtually never discovered in graves, perhaps for the same reason. The argument has been made above, however, that the paddle dolls effectively served as personified menats—menat-dancers who could cause the dead to rise and could bestow upon them all the blessings of the Golden One.

With the exception of the equation between the shape of the menat necklace and the shape of the figurine, virtually all of the lines of evidence that link the paddle dolls to the khener-women also apply to the genre of the truncated Middle Kingdom female figurine. These figurines are found both with (602, 828) and without (518, 809) paddle dolls at Asasif. Further, in general they are more frequently found in graves and houses at sites with royal mortuary temples or temples closely identified with the cult of the dead king (Lisht, Kahun, Hawara, Heliopolis, Abydos, Abusir = forty four dolls) than at sites without such structures (Kubban, Deir el-Bersha, el-Matarya, and Esna = six dolls total).[142]

The faience truncated figurines in particular frequently bear the diamond-shaped tattoo marks common to the dancer and the paddle doll alike. They have occasionally been found in groups, as in the tomb of Hepy, and some, distinguished by hairstyle particularly, seem to have represented prepubescent girls. The nude females are not infrequently associated with clappers, and at least one was discovered with both a hand-shaped clapper and a mirror—a kit that would allow her to perform the mirror dance. As in the case of the paddle dolls, the pubic triangle is almost always shown, though it should be noted that on the rare occasions when it is covered, the dresses worn may resemble those of the paddle dolls. The lack of clothing worn by the majority of these figurines, however, is perhaps their most striking departure from the iconography of the paddle dolls. It is thus tempting to suggest that the dance of the truncated female figure was different than that performed by the paddle doll. Perhaps the former type of figurine represented the all nude khener-dancer who occasionally performed amidst completely clothed counterparts, such as in the tomb of Kaiemankh at Giza (G4561) (see fig. 17).[143] This dancer no doubt also honored the goddess Hathor, but the point of her dance differed from that of the paddle doll in that concealing and revealing the secret of the khener-women was evidently not a central theme.

[142] The numbers given here are taken from Geraldine Pinch's list of type 1 female figurines (Pinch, *Votive*, 226–27). She lists eighteen truncated figurines as coming from Theban cemeteries.

[143] N. Kanawati, *Tombs at Gizeh: Kaiemankh (G4561) and Seshemnefer I (G4940)* (Warminster, 2001), 38, pl. 35. See similarly the nude dancer in N. Kanawati, *The Rock Tombs of El-Hawawish: The Cemetery of Akhmim III* (Sydney, 1982), fig. 12.

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The tradition of the truncated female figurines began at Lisht in the reign of Amenemhet I, when the royal mortuary cult was transferred from Thebes to Lisht, and it is significant that the vast majority of provenienced truncated figurines come from this site.[144] At Thebes, paddle dolls continued to be fashioned and still represented the women who danced in Nebhepetre Menuthotep's mortuary temple, but the newer type of figurine was also manufactured—sometimes replacing the paddle dolls and sometimes co-existing with them or with other experimental versions of female figurines. The commonly held notion that paddle dolls and their truncated descendants, should be considered "generic images that related to the general notion of fertility, encompassing sexuality, conception and the successful bearing and rearing of children"[145] must be reconsidered and their specific social persona acknowledged. These figurines were khener-dancers, whose exuberant, theatric, and ultimately regenerative dances performed for the benefit of kings and deities could also be harnessed for those that owned them. Royal resurrection appears in Middle Kingdom times—as both earlier and later—to have been largely placed in the hands (or womb) of the goddess Hathor, the patroness of music, dance, resurrection, and the much beloved "Mistress of the Vulva" and "Mistress of the Menat." These female figurines should be interpreted as the sacred performers that gladdened the heart of the goddess and raised her radiant father.[146] Materialized in ownable form, or placed in the grave as identity markers, the khener-women could be called upon by those who possessed them to serve as intercessors to the goddess and to perform in perpetuity for the benefit of the tomb owner's departed spirit.

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[144] Tooley "Middle Kingdom" 325–26.

[145] G. Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt* (London, 2000), 114.

[146] The truncated Middle Kingdom female figurines holding children were not found at Asasif or in association with paddle dolls and so have not been a subject of discussion. Given the role of khener-women in the delivery of the royal children in P. Westcar, however, the discovery of this type of social persona holding a child is not incongruous with the theory discussed above.

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